
A Free
Religious
Faith

THE REPORT
OF A
UNITARIAN COMMISSION

A FREE RELIGIOUS FAITH

A REPORT PRESENTED TO
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF UNITARIAN AND FREE
CHRISTIAN CHURCHES



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PREFACE

THIS volume represents the work of a group of writers appointed as a Commission of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, and left perfectly free to deal in their own way, as a group, with the subject of a Free Religious Faith. In accepting the result of their labours and approving it for publication, the Assembly does not imply that the book is issued as an authoritarian statement of denominational belief. It is published to help people both inside and outside the churches of the Assembly by an exposition of a religious faith which is free and yet definite in content. It expresses the way in which a group of people professing religious freedom approaches the problem of religion today, and it is the hope of the writers that it may prove of value to all who find themselves no longer able to accept authoritarian forms of religion.

The volume is divided into three parts:—

Part I consists of a general outline of the major conclusions, stated in a coherent and consecutive form. The reader who feels unable to accept some of these conclusions, or who thinks that certain possible objections to them have been overlooked, or who would like to see the issues discussed at greater length, is invited to proceed to the second part.

Part II consists of chapters on separate subjects. Here the problems involved in the general conclusions of the first part are considered in fuller detail. Except for the supplementary notes appended to some of the chapters, registering individual dissent on particular points, each chapter is published as the work of the group as a whole.

Part III contains two contributions included by the group as

stating individual points of view worthy of serious consideration, but not endorsed by the group as a whole.

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PART I

THE SUMMARY REPORT

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 CHRISTIANITY IN HISTORY.
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THE DECLINE OF RELIGION AND ITS CAUSES

Religion counts for little to-day in the lives of millions of men and women. God does not mean very much to most men and women, but to those of us to whom He means something real, He means more than ever He did, because we feel Him and think of Him not merely as a great power beyond our lives nor as a remote abstraction, but as the life of our lives and the soul of our souls, present with us and working in us and through us, in all that we do and are and aspire to be.

It is for us to understand why religion, which means so much to us, has come to count for so little in the lives of others; it is for us to ask what we can do to help men and women to recover a sense of divine meaning and strength in their lives.

Sometimes the decline is explained by the whole conditions of modern life—the higher speed at which people live uses up their energies and leaves them too exhausted to do anything more than exist on the surface of things. Undoubtedly the rush and hurry of modern life are very unfavourable to the deepening of man's spiritual life. But these conditions are symptoms of the trouble rather than its cause. The root causes go deeper.

When people to whom religion means little are willing to

answer the question why religion plays so little part in their lives, they usually reply in essence either that religion is not relevant to life, or that religion is not true.

When people say that religion is not relevant, they mean that in practice religion has little to do with people's daily lives. We recognize that religion often becomes a form and a convention, and even an escape from life. The failure of those who profess and call themselves Christians to act up to their faith is a stumbling-block in the way of others. The test is one that Jesus himself laid down: "By their fruits ye shall know them".

We would point out that as religion has declined and as men have felt more and more the emptiness of their lives, they have tried to create substitute religions to make up for what they have lost. For some sense of relationship to that which transcends the changes of life is essential to life, even if it be only a bare recognition of a cosmic process.

We would further point out that it is in a world in which religion has come to mean little that the structure of civilization has broken down. With the decline of religion has gone a loss of vision, and this loss has prevented men and women from facing with courage the problems which human progress of the past has brought upon them. This loss of sense of ultimate values in life has proved disastrous. Before the actual smash took place, most men's lives were not so much evil as trivial, purposeless and meaningless. But people who had lost the sense of meaning in their lives easily became tools of others with an evil purpose.

When the disaster came upon the world, the spirit of man responded courageously to the immediate dangers and difficulties of the time. This is, indeed, one of many hopeful signs of the surging of a new life in man. But the problems and difficulties that the next generation will be called upon to face will require immense patience and tenacity of purpose if they are to be solved in a way that will leave the life of man richer rather than poorer for the sufferings people have been called upon to bear. Such patience and tenacity of purpose and sense of values require ultimately to be rooted in the awareness of a purpose and a meaning transcending all the changes of our life. This is given by religion.

In trying to state what we believe the essence of religion to be, we shall not attempt to add one more definition to the hundreds of definitions of religion already in existence. There are so many definitions because religion is so all-embracing and appears so interwoven in every aspect of life that any fully adequate definition is impossible. All that we can do is to describe some of its characteristics. Professor A. N. Whitehead has described it as follows: "Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real, and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach, something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest". ("Science and the Modern World." P. 275. Cambridge University Press).

Religion, then, is certainly relevant to life and involves the profoundest personal and social implications. It does not fall within the province of this Commission to work out those implications but we are all fully conscious of them.¹

The second criticism, therefore, is the one with which we are concerned in this Report. Religion plays so little part in the life of man to-day because people believe that religion is not true. In the end everything turns on this. For when people suspect that religion is not true, they no longer seek, and because they no longer seek, they no longer find.

In our judgment the view that religion is not true has come to be widely accepted because religion has been identified with particular forms of religion which have become inadequate and with certain beliefs that have been discredited. Every expression of religion is limited and imperfect, and people have identified the limited and imperfect expression with religion itself. Changes are taking place in human consciousness as a result of all the accumulated experience of centuries and of the creative spirit of life, and these changes are being resisted by the innate conservatism of man and the dead weight of institutions. Faced with what seemed to be the loss of something that was precious to them, people have been afraid to go forward and

¹ See Part II. Paper on "The Social Implications of Religion". Pp. 40-45.

have tried to maintain the letter when the Spirit had gone out of it. The further the process went the more reluctant were they to trust themselves to the creative Spirit. So at the present day a revival of superstition can be witnessed not merely in the cruder forms of astrology, but also in some types of modern theology. The ultimate result of this reaction must be to widen the gulf between those to whom religion means much and those to whom it means little.

We believe that in this crisis we have a contribution of profound importance to make. We do not believe that there is a complete and final revelation of God. We look upon religion as a spiritual adventure. We do not base our Church life on the acceptance of particular creeds. We do not profess to have a fixed and final answer to all the problems which beset us. And we take up this position not because we have little faith, but just because we have complete confidence that in the long run man's search for truth can never lead him astray. Meanwhile we maintain that in every age people are given sufficient insight for their needs, and that if they act upon such insight as they have received and keep themselves ever alert and sensitive to new revelations of truth, they will receive new insight. We have no patience with people who tell us that they will act upon their insights when these have been proved beyond all doubt to be true. Such people are asking for something which men have never been given. But men have received glimpses and partial insights, and the only way to discover whether they are true is to test them in the light of all relevant knowledge and then to act upon them. We make our great affirmations, therefore, in the spirit of open-minded certainty, not as laying down new dogmas, but as guiding principles to help us on our journey through life. And we believe that in acting upon them we reach a deeper understanding of the meaning of human experience. We welcome every discovery that scientists and others are making, even though they bring with them new problems, because we are confident that when these discoveries are fully understood they can result only in a deeper sense of awe and reverence and gratitude before the great mystery of life. We believe that religion exists that we may have life, and have it more abundantly.

THE IMPACT OF SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

The belief that religion is not true has arisen in part through the impact of scientific discoveries about the nature of the world. Many people believe that science has shown the nature of the world to be such that it cannot be reconciled with the experience of religion and reality as religious men believe that they have received it. Unitarians have always welcomed the discoveries of scientists. We regard these discoveries as one of the highest achievements of man. We find in them confirmation of our belief that the universe is ultimately a rational universe in the highest sense of that much-abused word. The mind of man could never have made these discoveries about a universe that is mindless. The work of scientists has completely shattered any belief that might exist in men's minds that the world is a world of mere chaos, or a world of caprice. The world explained by scientists is a world of order, a world of mind, a world of reason. The scientist does all his work in virtue of his faith in the existence of that order and that reason. Whenever he finds an apparent contradiction in it, the scientist maintains either that the facts are not as stated, or that a deeper and truer hypothesis must be sought in which the apparent contradiction disappears. It would be impossible for the mind of man to discover anything about this order if there were no mind behind it. For "like is known by like, and the condition of all knowledge is that the subject shall become like the object" (Plotinus). Those religious men and women who decry reason display less faith than do the scientists, even though many of these fail to recognize that they are acting upon this faith.

What we would maintain is that scientists must learn to distinguish between their work when they are dealing with a limited analysis of the external world of nature considered under one aspect, and their work as philosophers when they are dealing with the total nature of reality. We do not believe that scientists can either prove or disprove the truth of religion. That is not their work. We can no more accept any particular scientific interpretation of the facts as final than we accept any particular form of religion as final and absolute. As a matter of fact, science does not say anything. It has no voice. Scien-

tists speak, not science, and their theories naturally vary according to the state of their knowledge and the calibre and capacity of the men concerned. The crude mechanist theories of the nineteenth century have already proved inadequate in the light of the very discoveries they helped men to make, and are being superseded.

It is the case, however, that the prevailing orthodox theories accepted by most scientists fail to do justice to experience as a whole, and leave little place for those ethical strivings and spiritual aspirations which are characteristic of men. The current theories of the twentieth century cannot be accepted as final, even within their own sphere. At the present day the great majority of biologists accept an interpretation of the facts at their disposal which would allow little place in life for design and purpose. But there are a few equally competent biologists who have arrived at quite opposite conclusions, and it may well be that what is a scientific heresy of to-day may become the orthodoxy of to-morrow. We include an account of one such interpretation as worthy of serious consideration.¹

We recognize quite candidly that at the moment a conflict exists, and perhaps always will exist, between the nature of the world revealed by analysis of aspects of the external universe and the nature of the world as revealed by the inner experience of the world's artists, prophets and saints, and we believe also by the world's great thinkers.

Meanwhile it is important to remember not only that untold ages of evolutionary progress lie behind the life of man, but that only in man is evolutionary progress continuing. The meaning of any process is given by that which comes into being as a result of the process, rather than what can be seen in its beginnings. Our knowledge of what has developed out of the amoeba is far more important for the understanding of human life than knowledge of the amoeba itself.

There are signs in the work of modern scientists that the most extreme form of the conflict may be reduced. And perhaps the day may soon come when the interpretation scientists are able to give of the world of nature may be more completely harmonized with the interpretations of human experience.²

¹ See Part III. Note on "Nature and Man". Pp. 202-206.

² See Part II. Papers on "Nature and Man" and "Religion and the Scientific Challenge". Pp. 46-64.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE

We maintain that no account of the universe is adequate which does not do justice to human experience. This is the only experience we really know from the inside. The very fact that these discoveries are made by men seeking truth is even more important than the discoveries themselves. Many scientists seem to forget that if their theories give an adequate account of total reality, they reduce their own lives to meaningless nonsense. A scientist cares, or should care, for truth. No analysis of the external world can explain this. Yet this love of truth is the driving force in the life of every true scientist. In the same way some men strive passionately for justice; some care profoundly for art; some love deeply. These experiences cannot be analysed and measured in the way that facts about the biological make-up of man can be analysed or measured. Yet they are the most significant and vital part of man's life. Religion belongs to this category of experience, and only those who deny that there is a spirit in man, revealed in man's striving after goodness, justice, beauty and truth, can reject out of hand man's spiritual striving as illusion. Man's strivings after truth, goodness, justice and beauty are indeed imperfect and intermittent, but they are essential characteristics of human life. They are part of the light that lighteth every man coming into the world.

Truth, goodness and beauty are meaningless words unless within and behind all life there is an order which is true and good and beautiful. These experiences point to something beyond the particular. They indicate the existence of an order of being which is true and good and beautiful and with which man can come into relationship, an order which, in fact, gives meaning to his life.

The search for truth and the discovery of truth would be impossible unless behind all the changing appearances of life there was Reason. Mind could never discover anything about a mindless universe. Truth would have no meaning if it were merely man made.

So, too, the striving after goodness implies the existence of a moral order to which man is called upon to make his life conform, or the word "ought" would have no meaning.

The great artist, again, is never just trying to express himself, but to give form in word or colour or sound to some vision he has had of something greater than himself.

Such experiences do not merely point to something beyond themselves. It is not enough to say that there is an order of truth, goodness and beauty which man can perceive, however dimly. Religious people demand a response of some kind. They demand that this order shall not be a lifeless abstraction, but something living, and in moments of illumination men have been conscious of becoming one with this life. That which might have remained only a theoretical deduction becomes a personal experience.

We believe that people have had experience of the one life that lies behind all our lives. Wordsworth described the experience in the familiar "Lines composed . . . above Tintern Abbey":—

" And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

Principal J. Estlin Carpenter once described an experience of this kind: "Suddenly I became conscious of the presence of someone else. I cannot describe it, but I felt that I had as direct a perception of the being of God all round about me as I have of you when we are together. It was no longer a matter of inference, it was an immediate act of spiritual (or whatever adjective you like to employ) apprehension. It came unsought, absolutely unexpectedly. I remember the wonderful transfiguration of the far-off woods and hills as they seemed to blend in the infinite being with which I was thus brought into relation. This experience did not last long. But it sufficed to change all my feeling. I had not found God because I had never looked for Him. But He had found me; He had, I could not but believe, made Himself personally known to me. I had not gone in search of a satisfying emotion, I did not work myself up into this state by any artificial means. But I felt that God

had come to me. I could now not only believe in Him with my mind, but love Him with my heart."¹

Christians have expressed the sense that God is not only living but loving by calling God "Our Father". Theologians have expressed it by calling God personal. Probably at the present day there is no greater stumbling-block in the way of many people's seeking after God than the description of God as personal. People think that to speak of God as personal means that God is "a Person"—that is, a being like ourselves. They know that men and women once actually did picture God in this way, and they think that to describe God as personal is merely man making God in our own image.

The difficulty is mainly one of words, of the limitations of language. We all agree that if to describe God as personal means that we think of Him as just "a Person", then the wording is unfortunate. But the truth behind it is a profound one. To remove the difficulty in modern times, philosophers have spoken of personality in God. The eminent American Unitarian, Theodore Parker (1810-1860), used to speak of God as "Our Father and Mother", thus conveying the truth, but making it impossible to form a visual picture of it. The idea behind the term is a profoundly true one. Personality is the highest value that we human beings know. Indeed, it may be said, as the Irish poet AE (George Russell) once said: "The creation of personality is the only purpose for which we can imagine the universe to have been created." The essential point is this, and it would appear to be self-evident, that God cannot be less than we are. If we are persons, then God may be described as Supra-personal, or perhaps the best way to put it is that in God alone is full and complete personality to be found.

If every man had a religious experience of the intensity of the religious genius, no one would query its significance. But this is equally true, again, of all the great spiritual experiences of man, intellectual, artistic, and moral as well as religious. There is only one Beethoven, but millions of men and women who could never reach the heights and depths of Beethoven are stirred by him to reach depths and heights they could not otherwise attain. For one Einstein, there are millions of lesser

¹ "Joseph Estlin Carpenter. A Memorial Volume." P. 10.

men who could not make his discoveries, but who can in some degree understand their significance and work out their implications. So, too, in religion. The prophets and the mystics are religious geniuses, but the experiences which they have in so high a degree can be shared in a lesser degree and on a lower plane by every human being. And if a human being has never been touched by these moments of illumination, he has never fully lived. We maintain that these experiences justify the interpretation of the universe as a spiritual reality and even point to the existence of personality in God.¹

THE PROBLEMS RAISED BY THESE IMPLICATIONS

If behind and beyond all the changes of life there lies the Being of God, and if God is love, certain problems arise which have troubled men the more they have become aware of the goodness of God and as they have come to think of God as more than just a cosmic power. If God is good, how can there be evil in the world? If God cares for men, why is there so much suffering in life? These are questions which have become more insistent as men have risen beyond the thought of God as cosmic power.

We do not offer any nicely rounded-off answers to these problems. We do not profess to know all the answers. We offer rather a way of approach for those who have the courage to follow it. We do not believe that men are called upon to face these problems entirely without guidance. We do believe that as men are called upon to undertake the arduous journey of life they are not left unarmed and defenceless, but are given such insight as is needed for each stage of the journey, if only they have the courage to act upon it. We believe that we can face these problems in ultimate confidence and with open-minded certainty. These problems themselves arise out of the very nature of human life. Life is an adventure, and in this adventure there are real conflicts to be fought and real choices to be made and real gains to be won. It is the course of this adventure that men are able to put on personality and rise to a high level in the scale of being.

¹ See Part II. Papers on "Truth, Goodness and Beauty"; "Absolute Values and God"; "Man and God"; "Modern Psychological Objections to the Reality of a Spiritual Order"; "Self-Consciousness, Personality and God". Pp. 63-110.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Evil is a fact in experience. History records many ways in which people have attempted to deal with this fact. They range from a monism which so emphasizes the unity of life that evil comes to be regarded rather as an unreal appearance, to a dualism which makes the opposition so strong that life comes to be regarded as a struggle between light and darkness, good and evil. The one fails because the appearance of evil is explained away, and the other fails because the unity of life is lost. Other solutions are mostly compromises between these two extremes. No completely adequate intellectual solution has indeed been found, but woe unto those who in the interests of a formal solution in words deny the fact of evil.

Evil is possible because the life we live in time has meaning. If people are here to fulfil a purpose, and the highest expression of that purpose that we can glimpse is that man should put on personality, then man must have a real power of choice, and the conflict of life must be a real struggle, not a sham fight. If the universe were mere chaos or just a big machine, or even a super-organism, then evil would have no meaning. But neither then would good have any meaning.

The essential fact to remember is that evil is something to be overcome, and not merely something to be understood, and that through religion men obtain both an insight into the good which shows up the evil and strength also to follow it. But evil is not ultimate. It is a fact, but one capable of removal. Many forms of evil, and these the ones which shock men most, are due to the festering of mental wounds received in early childhood. One of the greatest triumphs of the human mind of the present day is the discovery of techniques by which these wounds may be healed and suffering people made more fit to play their proper part in the world. In helping people to recover, religion is one of the most powerful forces.

Some evils that disturb our sense of goodness come from the fact that man has an animal ancestry, with a human mind capable of a divine power of imagination. When this divinely-human imagination is used to gratify needs and instincts we share with the animals, then this results in the most horrible perversions of life. When human beings are cruel, they are

more cruel than any animal. When they give way to excessive sensuality, they can be beastly in a way no beast can ever be.

Probably more harm has been done in the world by people's vanity and selfishness than by the sins listed in the Commandments. The sins of the spirit are not so melodramatic as the sins of the flesh, but they are far more common and do more to spoil life. These also arise out of the fact that the purpose of our lives is to put on personality. Vanity and selfishness are the result of identifying the putting-on of personality with the gratification of our own egos, and preferring the satisfaction of our own immediate desires to the well-being of the whole community. Religion, by giving men a vision of the life which transcends theirs and by teaching men that he who seeks his life shall lose it, helps men to overcome evil.¹

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

If God cares for men, why is there so much suffering in life? The existence of suffering is another problem that has troubled people since they began to reflect upon the meaning of life. Some have accepted the easy solution of regarding suffering as the result of evil that men had done in their present or past lives. The Book of Job refutes one such solution. The doctrine of Karma is another inadequate solution, though it may contain a germ of truth. It would be difficult to interpret the death of Socrates or of Jesus in either of these ways. Jesus spoke more truly when he said: "Think ye that they upon whom the tower in Siloam fell were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem?" (Luke. C. 13: v. 4.)

Again we do not offer a solution, but a way of approach. There are very many kinds of suffering, and we can see the meaning of some of these things more easily than of others. The sufferings of animals are probably not so intense as some people have imagined. The suffering which comes from natural catastrophes, like tidal waves, and from casual accidents has to be accepted as implicit in the phenomena of the natural order, and must be borne stoically, for without that order there could be no life. The suffering that men bring upon themselves when they break the moral law explains itself.

¹ See Part II. Paper and Notes on "The Problem of Evil". Pp. 101-108.

The suffering which the guilty inflict upon the innocent to many people presents the most torturing problem, and yet this is, in fact, the one on which we have most light. The innocent suffer for the guilty because we are members one of another. If we try to imagine what the world would be like if we were isolated units, unable to share one another's joys or sorrows, we should regard the alternative with more horror than any hell the human mind has created. And such a world would be a world of low achievement, for nothing would be passed on to the next generation. Every age would have to begin, not where the last left off, but where the last began. Nothing could be learned. Life would be a treadmill in which men of every age, instead of passing on to new and mightier tasks, were always engaged in grinding out the same thing. In every age men, like children, would still be devising alphabets, but no one would ever write in sentences. In every age men would be learning to make mud houses, but no one would ever build a cathedral. In every age men, like children, would be learning to draw, but no one would ever paint a picture. In every age men, like children, would look at the stars, but no one would ever perceive the laws of their motion. One life would be too short. A world in which one generation did not, for both good and evil, help to create the life of the next, would be a world without poetry, without painting, without architecture, without science.

Fundamentally the most important fact about suffering is that people are willing to undergo suffering for the sake of others. People are willing to suffer to help other people to realize an ideal. Along these lines the key is to be sought.

"Only upon some cross of pain or woe
God's son may lie."

(FRANCES POWER COBBE.)

If God is the life of our lives and the soul of our souls, human suffering cannot be regarded as a burden imposed upon us from without. In some sense it may indeed be held that God Himself participates in the suffering of those whom He has created to carry out His purposes.¹

¹ See Part II. Paper on "The Problem of Suffering". Pp. 109-120.

HUMAN DESTINY AND SURVIVAL AFTER DEATH

The problems of evil and suffering are linked up with the problem of human destiny, with what happens to man after his body has died. There is no doubt that these problems would not press so heavily on the human soul if men could see beyond our present life into the ultimate consequences of things.

Here again history shows in what various ways people have thought and felt about this tremendous problem. With a few exceptions, most peoples seem to have believed in some kind of existence after death. Often it has been a very shadowy, ghost-like existence. Sometimes it has been the resurrection of the body or the flesh. Some have thought of it in terms of re-incarnation.

The first Christians expected the end of the existing order of nature and its transformation into a supernatural order where natural conditions no longer existed. Resurrection to them was not the resurrection of the flesh, but participation in this new order in a psychical body.

Orthodox Churches have thought of life after death in terms of a physical resurrection, and cremation has even been opposed on the ground that it would make such resurrection impossible. Catholic Christians and Protestant Christians have both maintained that the future destiny of man was settled at the time of death. The believer would go to heaven, and the unbeliever to hell. For souls destined for heaven Catholics interposed a period of punishment in Purgatory. This punishment was both penal and purificatory. It was purificatory, in that a soul destined for heaven was made fit for its future destiny. It was penal since, contrary to widespread belief, it could not affect the final destiny of the soul.

At the present day there is widespread division of opinion on the subject of the survival of personality after death. For millions of people the old views of life after death have completely lost their hold. It is true that in recent times the negative arguments derived from crude nineteenth-century theories of the relationship of body and mind no longer have such weight attached to them. But the relation between the spirit of man and the organism through which that spirit is manifested in this life is still not adequately explained. It may be that the

spirit of man uses this body as an instrument to be cast aside when its work is done, but at present we have no certain knowledge of the process, or of the mode by which survival can take place. Many believe that psychical research may provide evidence for the fact of survival, and may even throw light on its mode.

Among Unitarians there is no uniform view on this question. Some are satisfied with, or at least acquiesce in, the sense of eternal life here and now felt in those moments of intense experience which transcend the awareness of time. They are satisfied to know that though they die, all they have done, or have tried to do, has become part of the fabric of life, and that the values realized in their personalities will be conserved in the Eternal Being. To others this is not enough. They believe that if there be no survival of personality after death, the waste of human effort and striving would be so immense as to destroy their faith in the rationality of the universe, as well as of its goodness. They believe that somehow they will have the opportunity to continue the work they have begun and to learn from the mistakes they have made in the past.

Meanwhile three things should be made clear. The first is that the longing for survival is quite legitimate. In this short period of our lives we make so many mistakes that there would seem to be an appalling waste if no opportunity of learning from them were provided. Secondly, many people who would acquiesce quite readily in their own extinction cannot acquiesce so readily in the extinction of those dear to them. Thirdly, on the other hand, it must be candidly recognized that so far mankind has never had any overwhelming evidence of survival. If human well-being or belief in God depended on proof of survival after death, the evidence provided for it would surely be more compelling. It may, indeed, be that as man develops higher powers and becomes more sensitive, this evidence will be provided, or it may be that to the end of our life in time belief or disbelief in the survival of personality after death will be just part of men's faith.¹

¹ See Part II. Paper and Note on "Human Destiny". Pp. 121-131.

RELIGION IN HUMAN HISTORY

Human history records men's efforts to enter into relation with the one Life behind all our lives and to find some answer to all these problems. In the history of religion may be seen the many different ways in which people have sought to express their vision. To many people the fact that religion has taken on so many different forms, and has appeared at such different levels, and is found in process of change is a stumbling-block. Those who believe that religion belongs only to the childhood of the race, or is merely an illusion due to man making God in his own image, believe that they find confirmation of their attitude in the variety of expressions of religion which have appeared in the life of man. We offer a very different explanation of this variety of forms. In the words of one of our own poets:

"God sends His teachers unto every age,
To every clime and every race of men,
With revelations fitted to their growth
And shape of mind, nor gives the realm of Truth
Into the selfish rule of one sole race:
Therefore each form of worship that hath swayed
The life of man, and given it to grasp
The master-key of Knowledge—reverence—
Infolds some germs of goodness and of right.

God is not dumb, that He should speak no more.
If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness
And find'st not Sinai, 'tis thy soul is poor.
There towers the mountain of the Voice no less,
Which whoso seeks shall find, but he who bends,
Intent on manna still and mortal ends,
Sees it not, neither hears its thundered lore."

(JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL: "Rhoecus" and "Bibliolaters".)

Religious experience is so completely revelant to life that it is bound up with all the other experiences, and therefore its expression is always limited and variously conditioned.

In the course of history man's knowledge of God rises from lower to higher levels of integration. Men ceased to worship God by human sacrifice or animal sacrifice, and learned to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Man's increasing knowledge of God is the result of a real process of discovery. Man no more made God when he made these discoveries than Benjamin

Franklin made electricity when he discovered its existence in the thunderstorm.

As the level of religion is raised, it becomes more highly moralized and seeks more adequate expression. God is felt and thought of less as power and more as righteousness and love, and even as beauty. For all these are aspects of God's life.

So immense is religious experience that men and women have been able to grasp it only in part. Some religions, for instance, have emphasized an impersonal reality behind the changing many. Some religions have emphasized the revelation of God as personal. It may be in the days to come that the new expression of religious consciousness will be able to make a more adequate synthesis of these two aspects than has been possible in the past. Christianity itself is a synthesis of religions—unified under a dominating principle of its own. The religious life of Christianity is so rich just because into it has been poured so much of what was best and highest in the experience of the Jews and the Greeks, and even also of the Barbarians. We hope that East and West may meet again, as they have met in the past, and through mutual interaction create a new expression of religion that will include the truest insights of each.

In this way, we hope, a world religion will come into being. For not only is a world religion essential to the needs of our times, but ultimately the very nature of religion demands a world religion. Religion will indeed continue to express itself in many forms, as Christianity and Buddhism and Hinduism express themselves in many forms and yet each with an underlying unity. Above all, we do not desire to see one uniform world church, for that in another way would impoverish the life of mankind as much as the claim of different churches each to be the one true church has impoverished the life of mankind. The world religion will not be an abstract expression of the highest common factor or of the lowest common multiple of existing religions. It will be a new synthesis, bringing together all the partial revelations men have received of God, not as bits of a jigsaw puzzle, but as one living unity,

"dim fragments meant
to be united in some wondrous whole."
(ROBERT BROWNING: "Paracelsus".)¹

¹ See Part II. Paper and Note on "Religion and Religions". Pp. 135-144.

CHRISTIANITY IN HISTORY

The religious inspiration of the Western world has been given by Christianity. To it we owe a debt of which we are growing more conscious as we are in danger of losing the insights it has given us. Christianity entered into the life of the Western world and gave men a new faith, a new hope, and a new love.

To Christians God has never been an impersonal reality, but a spirit of love. He has been thought of as "Our Father", and to Christians men are children of God. And this love of God and of man, Christians have sought to express in their lives here, for Christians have always given a positive value to the world process, even while they thought their home was in the heavens. For "God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good" (Genesis. C. 1: v. 31). "No man hath seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us" (I John. C. 4: v. 1).

Christianity arose inside Judaism. It took over the Old Testament from the Jews and added to it a New Testament in which the experiences of the Christians of the first century are on record as a source of lasting inspiration.

Christianity also entered into the treasures of Greek thought and feeling, and was thus enabled to give more adequate expression to certain aspects of its beliefs and to overcome some of the limitations derived from its Jewish heritage. To identify Christianity with either its Hebrew or Greek heritage is to destroy much of its peculiar richness and character.

The Old Testament and the New Testament formed the Bible, to which should be added the Books of the Apocrypha. The omission of the Apocrypha from the Bible is one of the losses which older Protestant theory imposed upon Christians for several centuries.

Among educated Christians the Bible is ceasing to be used as an armoury of texts. Our new understanding of the Bible gives it an added value. We no longer look upon it as a collection of proof texts, but as containing some of the most inspired religious writing in the world, and as a record of man's increasing knowledge of God.

Christianity began with Jesus Christ. The Gospels contain almost all that we know about him and his teaching.

The modern study of the Gospels has revealed the presence of great problems. Modern scholars differ profoundly in their interpretation of the facts and the value of the record. Their studies have made it increasingly evident that the thought forms of the New Testament were to a great extent dominated by the expectation of the imminent end of the existing world order and its supernatural transformation, together with the coming of the Christ as Lord and Judge. There seems little doubt that Jesus himself shared this expectation of the coming of the Kingdom. Such, at least, is the account given in the Gospels. To what degree does this account accord with historic fact? Those who regard the record in the Gospels as mainly the reflection of the faith of the early Church are faced with the difficulty of how the early Church came to hold this faith. Criticism has, indeed, shown how the tradition came to be modified. The process can be seen at work in the contrast between the accounts of the Baptism given in the Gospel according to St. Mark and the accounts given in the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Luke. But there remain in the Gospels many passages which, so far from reflecting the faith of the early Church, were opposed to it. It seems to us that these passages could have been preserved only if the Gospels have a higher historic value than many modern critics are prepared to allow them, and that they do preserve a genuine historic tradition even though that tradition was in process of transformation. We do not accept the conclusion of some modern critics that we know little or nothing of the historic Jesus.

Whatever view be taken of the problems disclosed in the freer and more intense study of the Gospels, the fact remains that Jesus did set in motion a great spiritual impulse and that the force of this impulse is not yet spent. If we ponder over the Gospels we can feel it. We can feel it also in the lives of all who have followed in his steps. Jesus did give men profound moral insights into the nature of man and of God, and through his life these insights were active in the lives of other men. It is for us here, as always, to be true to the spirit rather than the letter. And the finest way of being true to the spirit is to make it live again in our own age.

In essence the truth behind the symbolism of the last things is the triumphant faith that God's will would be done. But the form of the symbol has always reacted on the content and

produced many limitations in the Gospels which have often been glossed over in the past or misinterpreted, but of which people are bound to become increasingly aware as they read the Gospels with more open eyes and not in the light of later dogma.

The Gospels, for instance, do not teach universal salvation, but that many are called and that few are chosen. The Gospels do not teach the immortality of the soul, but a resurrection which was a cosmic act, in which those who were chosen would survive in another form. In the Epistles of St. Paul the failure of this transformation to take place has already become a problem. The Kingdom of God did not come and Christ did not appear. This failure might have been fatal to Christianity, but fortunately Christianity was able to translate the vision which it had been trying to express through one set of symbols into other symbols. These for the most part were derived from the Greeks. Christian thinkers were able to find more lasting forms in which to express their faith.

Early Christians believed that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead and that he had ascended into heaven, from which he would return with the new order. There is no part of the Gospel story so confused and contradictory as the accounts of the Resurrection. The story of the Virgin birth appeared comparatively early, and finds a place in the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Luke, though it is implicitly contradicted by the Gospels themselves.

As symbols and pictures these stories had their value. As professed statements of fact they work untold mischief. To identify belief in Christianity with belief in them is fatal. Myths and symbols exist at different levels, and the Virgin Birth, the Physical Resurrection and Ascension are stumbling-blocks rather than helps to many to-day.

As Christianity made converts, these converts enriched and transformed Christianity. Above all, Christianity owed profound insights to the great Apostle to the Gentiles, St. Paul, and to the writer of the Fourth Gospel.

Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, greatly enriched Christianity. He had a deep sense of the solidarity of man, of love as the supreme experience, and above all of the presence of the living Spirit. But in Paul are found also elaborate arguments arising out of his own mentality and his attempt to make a

bridge from the Jews to the Gentiles. So restricted was much of his theology that for centuries it was in practice almost ignored. And when the reformers of the sixteenth century concentrated so much attention on certain aspects of Pauline teaching, mostly misunderstood for lack of historical insight, the result was often disastrous.

Christians soon found the necessity imposed upon them of expressing their faith in terms intelligible to the new converts. In the New Testament there is not one theology, nor even one Christology, but several Christologies. No doubt, with all their differences, these Christologies have much in common; but each displays its own characteristics. In the New Testament can be seen the beginnings of that process through which Christian theology was developed, above all in response to need for restatement and reinterpretation as Christianity extended from the Jews to the Gentiles.

The first Christians did not look upon Christ as God Himself. No Jew could ever have so regarded anyone who appeared in mortal form. To the early Christians, Christ was Son of God, a superhuman being, but not God Himself. A certain number of texts are often brought forward to prove that in the New Testament Jesus was regarded as God. But none of these texts bears out this interpretation.

Our fundamental criticism of this belief is not based on texts, but goes deeper. We affirm, not so much that it is mistaken to say that God Himself once appeared as a human being upon this earth at a moment of time, as that it is inconceivable and utterly incompatible with thought. The Incarnation is true of all men, or it is meaningless. When the attempt is made to turn a symbol into a fact, the result is always disastrous. But the truth men were trying to express in symbolic form is a profound one. Browning has expressed it thus:

"The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
And thou must love me who have died for thee!'"

(ROBERT BROWNING: "An Epistle . . . of Karshish".)

In any case, Jesus himself declared that it is by the fruits o

men's faith, not by their profession, that men will be judged. "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew. C. 7: v. 21). Jesus regarded himself as the Messiah (the Christ) appointed to bring in the Kingdom of God. There is no evidence that he regarded himself as God.

We assert that what was not present in the mind of Jesus can never be regarded as essential to Christian discipleship. We cannot therefore regard as essential the acceptance of the chief doctrines of orthodox Christianity in the form in which they are stated—the Incarnation in its orthodox interpretation and the doctrine of the Trinity.

Later the doctrine of the Trinity was formulated to avoid the one-sided emphasis on either the divine or the human aspects of the life of Christ, and to maintain monotheism. With it was incorporated the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity as such is not found in the New Testament, and the terms in which it was later expressed are not in the New Testament itself. But there is much in the New Testament which prepared the way for it. As an attempt to maintain monotheism the doctrine has not been very successful. Popular Trinitarianism tends to become a kind of tri-theism, or perhaps a duo-theism, for in popular Trinitarianism the Spirit plays little part. Learned Trinitarianism comes under the suspicion of regarding the three persons in the Trinity as aspects of the divine Being. Both these views are heretical, but most attempts to explain the doctrine result in some form of heresy.

Early Unitarians criticized the orthodox form of the doctrine of the Trinity on the grounds that it was not scriptural. In modern Unitarianism this controversy plays little or no part. We recognize that there are ways of interpreting the doctrine of the Trinity which do more justice to man's religious insight than is found in some denials of it.

Fundamentally more important has been the Unitarian protest against the doctrine of the Atonement. This protest dates from the start of the modern Unitarian movement in the sixteenth century and is fully stated by Fausto Sozzini. This doctrine is not, indeed, to be found in the great creeds of Christendom but has played a large part in popular theology

and preaching. No doubt Christians have striven by this doctrine to help people to overcome the despair produced by the overwhelming conviction of sin resulting from the apprehension of the holiness of God. But no piece of Christian thinking has been so inadequate and has led to conceptions of God so morally and spiritually revolting. No doctrine has tended to become so mechanical. Nowhere has the Unitarian protest justified itself so utterly and been accepted so completely. The cruder forms of the doctrine are fast disappearing from Christian thought, except among fundamentalists.

Another doctrine which has been unfortunate in its expression has been the doctrine of Predestination. Like all other doctrines, this began as an attempt to express some truth, but often that part of truth was divorced from its context and so exaggerated by a process of abstract logic that in the end the very truth it expressed became an evil from which men revolted. The truth behind the doctrine of Predestination was the sense of the overpowering transcendence of God and that we are here as instruments of God's purpose. But this was completely divorced from the complementary truth of God's immanence. And when men asserted that God, for His own glory, doomed some people to eternal damnation, they had obviously lost all sense of the mind of Christ.

We hold that Christians can be satisfied only with a view which maintains, not only that God's purpose will not be fulfilled till all men are saved, but that unless all men are saved, no man can be saved, so ultimate is human solidarity. "We are members one of another, and if one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it." "If there breathe on earth a slave, Are ye truly free and brave?" In modern times there are dangerous signs that these traditional doctrines which we have criticized are recovering a new lease of life, as the expression of present-day theological pessimism. We contend that the disaster which has come upon the world has not arisen because people have cherished too lofty a conception of human dignity, but because they have ignored the spiritual nature of man. People have failed to recognize that we are children of God, and so have not striven to rise up to the obligations that their nature imposes upon them.

As Christianity came into contact with the peoples of Europe and other parts of the world and converted them, these peoples

also transformed Christianity. It would be fundamentally mistaken to regard the history of Christianity as merely the history of the corruption of Christianity, but the imperfections of those who profess and call themselves Christians are only too evident at every stage of Christian history. Fortunately, behind Christianity lay the record of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels, and of the experiences and thought of early Christians as recorded in the rest of the New Testament. And it has been to the Gospels, or to the rest of the New Testament, that Christians have turned when they became aware of the imperfections and corruptions of the Church in any particular age. The New Testament has again and again been the source of new life and inspiration. But the nature of its authority must not be misunderstood. We cannot regard the New Testament as a final and infallible expression of Christianity, nor as a court of final appeal.

The first Christians formed communities which came together and eventually became known as the Church. The Church served a great purpose in keeping alive the sense of the presence of Christ and in handing down a tradition of great value. But here, too, there was loss as well as gain. In the course of its history this Church not only was corrupted by the imperfections of its members, but came to be regarded, in fact if not in theory, as an end in itself, to be preserved at all costs, not only against attacks from the outside, but against those who were conscious of its imperfections from the inside. There came a time when those who professed and called themselves Christians were willing to torture and to kill their fellow-Christians for the greater glory of God, so completely did the Church in its worst moments fail to be true to the mind of Christ.

The one Church became divided into many churches, and to-day there are scores of churches taking the name of Christian. In itself the existence of these different forms of Christianity has probably done much to keep it alive. Each has emphasized some aspect of truth which might otherwise have been neglected and forgotten. But unfortunately in the past most of these have claimed to be the only true Christian Church. The Orthodox Church (the Greek Church) and the Roman Catholic Church still make that claim. Among other

Churches, and also to some degree even in these Churches, Christians are becoming more aware that that which they have in common over against a secularized and pagan world is more precious than that which divides them.¹

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS CAPACITY

If, as we affirm, the religious sense of that which lies behind and beyond all life is essential to a full humanity, and if at the present day many people have lost that sense, and if at all times only a few religious geniuses have felt this presence so absolutely that nothing else counted, the practical question arises, how can this sense be developed? How can people be brought to see this vision?

When disaster falls upon mankind and an intense sense of need is felt, the barriers which people have erected in their minds fall down. And when men begin to seek, they find. Their souls lie open to the incoming of the Spirit. This process cannot consciously be accelerated, but its existence is a fact of human experience of profound importance. "In an hour that ye know not, the Son of Man cometh." This implies the existence of a reservoir of spiritual life available to us. The experience is the response of the Divine Spirit to the longings of our spirits.

At ordinary times there is much truth in the statement that religion is caught and not taught. Every religious person, consciously or unconsciously, becomes a source of new life in others.

Experience shows that the religious life of a community is richer when someone with special gifts is set aside to become the leader, the teacher, the prophet, and the friend of the community. The Unitarian ministry is not based on any distinction between priests and laymen. We believe in the priesthood of all believers. But we recognize the existence of different gifts and of different degrees of the same gift.

Above all, it is through prayer that men can deepen their religious capacity. All through human history men and women have desired to pray, and when men cease to pray, the religious

¹ See Part II. Papers on "The Bible", "The Significance of Jesus for the Modern Mind", "Sin and Forgiveness", "The Atonement". Pp. 148-184; Part III. "The Myth". Pp. 207-219.

life dries up and withers away. Prayer, indeed, might be regarded as a human necessity rooted on the one hand in man's sense of need and on the other in his recognition of the greatness of the universe in which he dwells. The form of such prayer ranges from the prayers of simple, childlike, unreflecting minds speaking to God as though He were without, to the mystic's intense sense of oneness with God. Through prayer, above all, the religious life is nourished and deepened.

A problem arises in connection with what is called petitionary prayer. It is quite natural that in moments of distress, and above all in those moments, people should be aware of the needs of those dearest to them. Yet to many people petitionary prayer seems rather like trying to interfere with the cosmic process for selfish reasons. But provided always that the petitions contain no element of selfishness or of self-seeking, and that they are attuned to man's highest moral insights, they may be recognized as a natural and justifiable outpouring of the human heart.

Those forms of religion have displayed the greatest power of survival whose members are linked together in the performance of these religious rites. In religious history sacramental rites have played a very great part. In the course of religious history these rites have been more and more freed from their early and crude associations and have been given symbolic significance. Even to-day probably many people have their most intense sense of the presence of God whilst partaking of the Mass or the Communion Service. At the other extreme is the Religious Society of Friends, who have no Sacraments involving rites, but who have found in the practice of the silent waiting on the Spirit an experience that has been well called the Sacrament of Silence.

Sacramental practice among Unitarians is not uniform, but it is generally agreed that sacramental value attaches to all rites of worship, and indeed that the universe itself has sacramental value. Some Unitarians find help in the regular celebration of the Communion Service as a symbol of their own spiritual experience. Some who do not find help in this rite are striving to discover other forms in which the same value may be realized by them.¹

¹ See Part II. Paper on "Worship, Sacraments and Prayer". Pp. 185-193.

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

The great instrument which has been created to keep alive and intensify man's sense of the presence of God beyond, behind and within all life, is the institution of the Church. In churches people come together for common worship, common prayer, and in most Christian churches to receive the Sacraments. To-day there is a widespread and profound distrust of the Church as an institution. There are indeed dark pages in the long history of the Church, as of every other human institution, and these dark pages appear all the darker as part of the record of an institution claiming to be divine. The institution has been regarded as an end in itself, and has repeatedly resisted every attempt to recall it to its purpose and function. In the last few years, however, the Churches have shown signs of a deeper awareness of their imperfections and a greater readiness to face the new conditions. With all their imperfections, they have made a great contribution to human life, and without them it might well be that people would not even be discussing the truth of Christianity.

Nothing has done more harm to religion and to the Churches in modern times than the claim of so many Churches to be the one true Church. No doubt this claim is a source of strength when it is naïvely believed; but once doubted the claim becomes a disaster.

In recent times, perhaps under the stress of adversity but more, we hope, through a renewed sense of life and of the fundamentals of religion, this attitude is weakening. Christian churches are now co-operating in many activities to redeem the world, and, in working together, are discovering what they have in common.

Unitarians have good reason to be aware of this exclusiveness. From the beginning of their history till quite recent times they have been regarded as outside the pale of Christianity. The last Christian martyrs in Britain were Unitarians, and when active martyrdom ceased, persecution continued in other ways. Only in the nineteenth century were all legal disabilities removed from Unitarians. Even to-day Unitarians are often excluded from co-operation with other Christians.

We, for our part, fully recognize that the orthodox Christian

forms of worship and of Church order and belief have in the course of history been the means of inspiring millions of people with the sense of the presence of God. We do not seek to destroy those forms. Where we think they are imperfect and inadequate, we are prepared to leave them to the operation of the mental and spiritual forces we believe to be at work in the modern world. But when orthodox Christians identify these forms with essential Christianity, when they affirm that only those who accept them can profess and call themselves Christians, we are bound to take issue with them, for the sake of those souls in danger of fatal wounds from this cause.

We believe that Christians have not only the right, but the duty to be free to seek new truth wherever it may be found.

Unitarians are in no danger of being blind to the imperfections of the institution of the Church. They have, indeed, tended rather to fall into opposite danger, of under-valuing the work of the Church and regarding people as isolated units, and so being blind to the profound truth that we are members one of another. Sometimes Unitarians have gone so far in their individualism that they have regarded their work as done when people have abandoned old forms of belief, and have failed to realize that the spiritual life of these people might be poorer if they merely abandoned the old forms without entering into the life of the new ones.

Our failure in the past to realize the vital importance of the fellowship of the Church in keeping alive the vision was no doubt due to our profound sense that the only authority in religion is that of the conscience, soul, and mind of man—that is, an inner authority. This discovery seemed to leave no vital place for the Church. Experience has shown us the disastrous consequences of our mistake. The conscience, soul and mind of man are indeed the supreme authority in religion, as in all other aspects of life. In the long run people can only live on what they really feel and think. But the more the emphasis is placed on the conscience, soul and mind of man, the more vitally important should it be to recognize that to attain their highest development these need that fellowship with others which the Church should provide. The conscience of man can easily become sluggish and insensitive; the mind of man can be closed; the soul of man can be starved. And without the

help given by the Church this is what usually happens in most lives. Exceptional souls may live on resources not mediated by the fellowship of the Church. Others need to receive the inspiration, enlightenment, and fellowship which the Church may give, and the opportunity to express the deepest aspirations of the soul.

Unitarians, just because of their freedom, should recognize the high function of the Church more than others, because their religion makes such tremendous demands on them, and if they fail to rise to these demands, they have so little to fall back upon.

The institution of the Church is rooted in a universal fact of experience, that wherever people feel a common need they come together to satisfy it, and that the life of man is richer by being shared. The specific institution which has been created for the deepening of man's religious life is the institution of the Church. "No institutions can create life—that is the work of God within the soul—but they can save it from waste; they can collect together its scattered sparks; they can make one glowing fire out of dispersed embers that could not long maintain their separate heat; they can control its action, and regulate its fitfulness, and concentrate its power; and, above all, they can raise it to enthusiasm, through the joy that thrills it when it passes into fitting works, and sees of the travail of its soul and is satisfied." (J. H. Thom: "A Spiritual Faith". P. 343.)¹

The Church that we have in mind is a Church of the Free Spirit, giving men new strength and courage to accept the challenge and the responsibilities of freedom. This deepened sense of the need of fellowship in no wise conflicts with the principle of freedom which lies at the very heart of our faith. This tradition of freedom is a most precious heritage of our congregations, and when those congregations and their members were finally brought together into a more formal but still quite voluntary union of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, they adopted the principle as the basis of their co-operation. The objects of the Assembly are stated as "the promotion of pure Religion and the Worship of God in Spirit and in Truth", "the diffusion of the principles of Unitarian Christianity", and "the formation and assistance of

¹ See Part II. Paper on "The Function of the Church". Pp. 194-201.

congregations which do not require for themselves or their ministers subscription to any doctrinal articles of belief".

Freedom in religion, as everywhere in life, makes high demands on the individual. At the present day many people seem to find these demands too heavy, and are returning to forms of authoritarianism which we believe to be dangerous to the human spirit. In the long run authoritarianism in society and authoritarianism in religion go together, on the one hand, as freedom in society and freedom in religion go together on the other. We believe that at the present moment a tremendous choice lies before mankind.

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side:
Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offers each the bloom or blight;
And the choice goes by for ever 'twixt that darkness and that light."
(JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL; "On the Present Crisis".)

Many people to-day stand outside religious fellowship or throw in their lot with authoritarianism because they believe that they have to choose between dogmatism and scepticism. We hope that this Report will bring home to such people the fact that there is another attitude: the attitude of open-minded certainty. The faith of those who take up this attitude is not empty of content, but results in the great affirmations we have laid before you. We hope that when people realize that the choice is not between dogmatism and scepticism, but rather between a dogmatic faith and a free faith, they will choose freedom. To those who make this choice, religion is an adventure of the spirit, and not a rule of safety. Even if they be few in numbers, in time others will follow where they lead. In every generation there must be some few who go ahead of the others, preparing the paths for them to tread in and inspiring them with the courage to abandon old forms at the call of life. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Yet at every step of the way, men shall find, if they are faithful to their vision and trust it utterly, that, somehow, something in the Universe responds to their need. And this something is the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are children of God.

PART II

PAPERS AND NOTES

- THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF RELIGION.
- NATURE AND MAN.
- RELIGION AND THE SCIENTIFIC CHALLENGE.
- TRUTH, GOODNESS AND BEAUTY.
- MAN AND GOD.
- MODERN PSYCHOLOGICAL OBJECTIONS TO THE REALITY OF A SPIRITUAL ORDER.
- SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS, PERSONALITY AND GOD.
- THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.
- NOTE ON THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.
- THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING.
- HUMAN DESTINY.
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- NOTE ON RELIGION AND RELIGIONS.
- THE BIBLE.
- THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS FOR THE MODERN MIND.
- NOTE ON THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JESUS.
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THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF RELIGION

Religion must help us to meet the urgent practical problems which confront us. It is often said that Christianity is incapable of giving us the guidance we need. In its traditional expression, certainly, Christian piety has been seriously defective. It has to a great extent ignored men's social responsibility. The failure does not lie, as is sometimes held, in the nature of religion as an inner quest. Social evil has its root in the denial of spiritual values, and it cannot be effectively remedied without inner transformation. As an ethic of love, the Christian way of life is intrinsically social, but men have failed to see what love involves. Christian love demands the creation of a new order based on fellowship and service. Unitarians have been pioneers in many types of social reform. To-day the ideal of a Christian society, which so greatly influenced the Socinians in the sixteenth century, has come to be widely acknowledged. The goal of religion is not, however, in a mere world-community, but in the eternal Kingdom of God, which it is our task increasingly to incarnate.

It has been the primary task of the "Commission on our Free Religious Faith" to express the convictions which its members hold in common concerning the fundamental issues of religious thought as they present themselves to the men and women of to-day. The members of the Commission are united in the belief that it is of the greatest possible importance to the future of religion that the faith for which it stands shall be one capable of meeting fearlessly the problems which present themselves to us in the light of the new knowledge which the growth of science and scholarship has brought. The religion which the needs of our time demand is one in which we can whole-heartedly believe. But the challenge which comes to religion is not merely the challenge of modern thought. If religion is to vindicate its claims, it must show itself to be a guide, not merely to the attainment of Truth, but to the achievement of Good. It must help us to meet the urgent problems of personal and communal living with which we are confronted

in the modern world. The work of the Commission would therefore be incomplete if the endeavour were not made to indicate, in however brief and summary a fashion, the practical bearing of the faith for which its members stand.

The expression of religion lies in personal consecration to the service of God. That is universally agreed. But what does this consecration mean in practice? What does it imply for individual living and for the order of the world? In modern times there has come about a very decided reaction against the older type of Christian piety. The contention is sometimes made that the Christian ideal is inadequate to the needs of modern life. It is said, moreover, that by its essential nature, as a principle of personal living, the Christian ideal is irrelevant, and tends, indeed, to distract our gaze from the essential factors of the situation. What is necessary, we are told, is social, economic, political transformation; the call to personal holiness, personal consecration, the quest of personal union with God, has no vital meaning. The challenge may be met by a counter-assertion. So far is Christianity from being irrelevant, we contend, that in actual fact it is through the Christian way of life alone that the problems of the world can be solved. The difference so expressed is clearly fundamental. It arises in part from a radical divergence of view as to the character of the evils from which the world is suffering. Yet it plainly arises also from a different interpretation of the nature and scope of the Christian ethic.

The reaction which has taken place in the modern world against traditional piety springs, in one aspect, from the recognition of its deficiencies. The traditional Christian ethic has been characterized by a certain asceticism and "other-worldliness". That is true not only of the Catholic saintliness which finds expression in the life of the monastic cell; it is true also of the Evangelical attitude which looks upon the present world as a "City of Destruction" from which we are called to seek deliverance. Asceticism and "otherworldliness" have a positive significance as assertions of the supremacy of the spirit in man and the reality of the unseen and eternal order which is our goal. There is in man that which transcends the world of time and space to which he belongs, and he must ever look beyond it. But religion cannot be satisfactorily regarded as a

mere "escape". It may not be possible fully to realize the Kingdom of God on earth, but it is our task to strive constantly for the coming of the Kingdom.

The ascetic strain in Christian piety has been a hindrance to a sane and healthy attitude towards the problems of sex. It has made for a morbid depreciation of the claims of the bodily life. Christian piety has, at the same time, promoted a self-centred holiness, which has been singularly blind to the evils of society. In the nineteenth century Nietzsche criticized Christianity as "magnifying selfishness to infinity" because of the emphasis which it lays on the salvation of the individual soul. A similar, though more temperate, criticism, has been voiced in recent times by Gerald Heard. Whatever truth may underlie Nietzsche's criticism, his words can scarcely be justified as they stand, for salvation, however crudely it may be conceived, does bring a certain deliverance from self and a certain consecration of the soul to God. Evangelicalism has been in some measure a social dynamic. That was notably the case with Wilberforce and the movement for the abolition of Negro slavery, and again with Shaftesbury and factory reform. Yet the fact remains that Christian piety has been largely blind to social wrongs. What has been mainly lacking on the part of religious bodies is the realization that in the Christian ethic we have a standard not only for individual living, but for the whole order of life. Aldous Huxley has shown in "Grey Eminence" how it is possible for someone who in his personal life is utterly devoted to the love and service of God, to give himself, with no consciousness of inconsistency, to the ruthless pursuit of "power-politics".

The application of Christian ethics has been strangely limited in its scope. Men sometimes suppose that that limitation arises from the very nature of Christian piety. Religion, they suggest, is essentially an opiate, a force which makes for acquiescence in social wrong, because of the stress which it lays on inner transformation. That, however, is a superficial view. There is, no doubt, a danger in the emphasis which a spiritual religion lays on the cultivation of the inner life. In the endeavour to lose and to give himself, a man may become pre-occupied with his own state of soul; he may lose sight of the very goal which he seeks—the surrender of the self to God.

But it does not follow from this that we should abandon the quest. Religious men have ignored the social aspect of their faith, but it does not follow that the wrongs of the world can be effectively righted on a non-religious basis. If we look deep enough, we shall find everywhere at the root of social evil the denial of the values of the spirit. That is evident enough with the Totalitarian systems which are so serious a menace to human freedom. It is evident also in the mammonism which has been the main disease of modern society. There can be no real or lasting cure of social ills which does not rest upon a profound inner transformation.

Christian teachers have recognized the primacy of love, although they have often failed to see what love involves. So far as the Christian ethic has been brought to bear effectively upon the life of the world, it has been through the agency of men whose inner being has been transformed by the power of the Spirit—"theocentric saints", in whom the love of God has expressed itself in the passion of redemptive service. The love of the neighbour, as they have seen, is no secondary consequence of the love of God; the one is the immediate and necessary expression of the other. In the life of the man so inspired self-seeking, domination, the desire for privilege, the sense of superiority—the egoistic tendencies which lie at the root of the evils of society—fall away. They are replaced by the desire to give, to serve, to create, to share, to join with others in the common fellowship of the Kingdom of God. So far as Christian piety is true to itself, in other words, it demands expression in social terms; it demands expression in the creation of a society, a world-order, based not on the quest of gain and power, but on self-giving in the realization of the common good.

Society needs a religious basis; religion needs a social expression. In the endeavour to apply the principles of the Christian faith to the ordering of the common life, an active part has been taken in many directions by Unitarians. It was a distinctive characteristic of the Socinians in the sixteenth century that they cherished the vision of a Christian society; they strove to regulate their whole life in accordance with the Law of Love. It is the glory of the early Unitarians that, at a time when intolerance and persecution were accepted by the

man called "the institution of the dear love of comrades" can only be built in the hearts of men. That institution cannot be finally established by any revolutionary transformation of the conditions of outer life; it must be rebuilt age by age and day by day. Religion appeals to us not *en masse*, but as men and women who seek the fulfilment of their being in the love of God. The goal of religion lies, therefore, not in any limited or localized society, but in a fellowship of souls rising beyond themselves into union with God. Such a fellowship transcends the limitations of time and space. It belongs in its fullness of reality to the eternal order—the eternal Kingdom of God—to which it is the deepest purpose of our being to attain.

In the vision of that eternal order—that eternal Kingdom which is "God Himself with all His riches"—and its increasing realization in the life of man in all its aspects, individual and collective, we have the end and inspiration of our endeavour. The fullness of the Kingdom cannot be realized in time; but the glory of the Kingdom can be increasingly incarnated in human souls and expressed in human life.

overwhelming majority of Christians as social and religious necessities, they upheld the principle of religious freedom. Freedom has, indeed, been the very life-blood of the Unitarian movement. Their devotion to freedom has led Unitarians again and again into the work of political and social reform. In the eighteenth century they played a great part in the movement for political democracy and for the emancipation of the slaves. As R. V. Holt has shown in his book, "The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress", they were pioneers in later years in many efforts for reform—in the extension of education, in the development of local government, of public health and municipal enterprise, in the recognition of sex equality.

In recent years there has been a growing perception of the fact that Christianity demands a fundamental change in the order of the world. It is typical of the change of outlook which is taking place that religious aspiration tends increasingly to express itself in terms of the "Kingdom of God". What-ever its precise significance, the Kingdom of God can scarcely be conceived as a merely individual state; the vision of the Kingdom carries with it the implication of a community or fellowship in which men shall participate. The Kingdom of God has been defined as "the community in which the will of God is done". The assumption is sometimes made that the goal of human effort lies in the "creation" or "establishment" of such a community. "Christianity", says John Macmurray (in his "Challenge to the Churches"), "is inherently a revolutionary religion seeking the establishment of a world community. It is about a new society." These, however, are partial, and therefore, taken by themselves, misleading assertions. Essential as it is, the social aspect of religion is not its whole reality. The Christian ideal, once it comes in living fact to possess men's hearts, will bring with it a radical change in the organization of society; it will lead men to create a new world-order. But whatever order may be created, whatever institutions may be established, the end of life is not in such things. Human life is lived in individual men and women, and it is impossible by the creation of any particular form of social organization to ensure that the spirit of service and fellowship shall prevail. However far-reaching may be its implications for the life of the community, what Walt Whit-

NATURE AND MAN

The universe consists of energy, and energy itself can be purposive. There has been a running-down process in the universe, but a building-up one has supervened. Life recognizable by us appears in a very tiny part of the universe. Man is very small in space and time. It is not quantity that matters. The universe is like a volcano: that which first comes out is large in quantity but low in quality, then the crystal, the colloid, protoplasm, cells, organisms, plants, animals, man.

There is intelligence manifest in the structure and functioning of things—not divine, but there is a reservoir of intelligence, and entities in trying to solve their problems can draw upon it. All experience is relative to the percipients. Man is the apex of a pyramidal structure where the mind that permeates the whole emerges to the light of consciousness and, in the organism and mind of man, becomes the inheritor of manifestations from the base to the top of the pyramid. The real self can progress not only through progress of body and mind, but also through rising superior to their limitations. The ultimate reality is spiritual, and the purpose of the universe is the voluntary attainment and realization of truth, goodness and beauty.

How have things come into existence? It is a question but seldom raised, and when it is raised, most people are content with the answer, "By evolution". Now, apart altogether from the difficulty of applying the idea of biological evolution to inanimate things,¹ there is no clear and generally accepted doctrine of evolution except the main generalization that things have changed very much. In many minds evolution is still identified with natural selection. Natural selection accounts for the accumulation and loss of characters—how far, is in dispute. But, for the origin of characters, to speak of "variation", "mutation", "differentiation" or the like is merely to refer

¹ See, for example, J. C. Willis: "The Course of Evolution by Differentiation or Divergent Mutation rather than by Selection". Cambridge University Press, 1940.

to the fact, not to explain it. No explanation whatsoever is offered of how the changes themselves came into existence.¹

The best approach to the problem of creation is from the fact that the universe consists of energy. It is not in the manifestations of energy that the creative principle is now believed to reside, but within the energy. Professor Wood Jones has recently made the suggestion that *energy itself can be purposive*—i.e., that within energy itself can be purposive life.

If this is so, the idea of evolution can be truly applied to the "inanimate": the universe has really evolved. When we look into this kaleidoscope, we see first the pattern of the inanimate. In the inanimate the vortices of energy are going at colossal speeds. This speed diminishes—this being the running-down process, the entropy. We watch entropy operating during eight to ten million years. Professor Macneile Dixon, in his remarkable Gifford Lectures, argued that when the speed of the vortices ran down sufficiently, control from within became evident to us. We discover the crystal that grows; then there appears the colloid that shows likeness to life; then there is the bacterion. From that point on emerged in the course of time the building-up process of life that we are able to recognize as such, with its great ramifications, its many failures, but its general and vast progress. The kaleidoscope has turned, and we see the pattern of plant life. It has turned again, and we see that of animal life. Another turn, and we see the vast progress of man.

Life recognizable by us appears in a very small part of the universe. The Earth is to the universe as a speck of dust in St. Paul's Cathedral. The very nature of life is a struggle against odds. Even in the Earth, life has managed to exist only in very restricted regions. As to man, so small is he that all Earth's millions could find standing-room on the Isle of Wight, and if they were packed cubically, their box would measure only half a mile each way.

In a cinema film showing the history of life on the Earth in true proportion to time, and running for two hours, the career of the human race would take only the last few seconds. 'Life' has existed on the Earth for some 300,000,000 years, and man for some 300,000. Within human history the pre-

¹ One possible explanation is considered in the third Part. Pp. 202-206.

history of man covers ninety-nine per cent. of all human history in chronological extent.

We begin to see that it is not quantity that matters, but quality. The universe is like a volcano. That which was at one time the highest form of existence known to our world, apparently lifeless matter, now lies at the base of the mountain. Then, by imperceptible transition, come the crystals that grow, the colloid that shows likeness to life, protoplasm, cells, organisms, plants, animals, man.

Julian Huxley, in his recent book, "Evolution", finds that there is no purpose in the universe other than our purposes: "If we wish to work towards a purpose for the future of man, we must formulate that purpose ourselves; purposes in life are made, not found." How, we ask, did man become capable of having purpose? Evolution teaches that it must have been evolved, that it must have been in the antecedents. The reviewer of "Evolution" in "The Times Literary Supplement" said, "It needs great faith to look upon the development of, say, the eye, as wholly the result of fortuitous mutations." As another writer has put it, "I have tried to think how particles of lifeless matter might by chance have formed themselves in a million years into the bones, muscles, digestive and respiratory organs, blood, flesh, skin, all the parts co-ordinated and unified with the vital principle of life, and I find it absolutely impossible to imagine how it could happen at all." There is no escaping the fact that there is intelligence manifested in the structure and functioning of things. It is what we mean when we speak of 'Nature' contriving this or that. It is not the intelligence of God or of a god; it is put to extremely cruel as well as good uses and is limited. (Helmholtz, it will be remembered, wrote of the human eye, "If an optician sent it to me as an instrument, I should return it for the carelessness of the work and demand my money back".) But that intelligence is there cannot be denied. The cuttlefish and the vertebrates developed eyes on their own account in wholly different ways and from different parts of the body. The butterfly's eye contains 5000 lenses and 50,000 nerves. Within the human brain there are some 18,000 millions of microscopic nerve-cells; they are grouped in myriads of battalions, and the battalions are linked together by a system of communications which has no parallel in any tele-

phone network devised by man; moreover, the brain works as a whole, and not as a telephone exchange with one unit exclusively for this and another exclusively for that.

It seems that there is a reservoir of intelligence, and that entities, in striving to solve their problems of existing and in seeking satisfaction, are able to draw upon it—both for good and for bad purposes. In nature, as in man, intelligence is not in itself moral. Jung said long ago that we are free to hold that the psyche arises from a non-material principle which is at least as widespread and inaccessible to our intelligence as matter is.¹

Suppose an act of consciousness sets up a vibration characteristic of, peculiar to, that particular act of consciousness. Suppose this centre of consciousness produces a second act of consciousness which sets up a vibration characteristic of, peculiar to, *it*; and so on. A group of vibrations cohering and continuing and gross enough to be apprehended through the senses we have developed would be a 'thing', and if it could manifest to us sensitiveness and purposive action, we should recognize it as living.

We can now see that all experience is relative to the percipients. There is, for example, no absolute up and down in the universe: up and down are relative to the things being spoken about. There is no such thing as absolute size; our standard of big and small depends on the person speaking or on his purpose at the time of speaking. Time is also relative to the percipients. What is the present? It is a notion, very complex, in minds, with constantly changing contents, relative to the experiencer. What the telescope reveals to-day in the nebula of Andromeda is what happened a million years ago. If not the past, at least the apprehension of the past changes. The past changes into the present, and the present into the future, and the future is alterable.

The apprehension of space in its various dimensions is also relative to the percipient. A being limited to experience of space in one dimension, up and down a line, could have as his only apprehension of other things points at which he was aware

¹ "The ultimate nature of matter has been shown by modern physics to be just as insoluble a problem as that of the ultimate nature of life." (SIR LEONARD HILL in "The Listener." December 10th, 1942.)

of his line being altered. A being limited to space of two dimensions, a plane surface, could have as his experience of other things only the surfaces at which he experienced their surfaces affecting his. Suppose that a sphere descends upon the plane surface; all that the inhabitants are conscious of is the circle that increases and decreases until it vanishes.

Consciousness, surrounded by indefinitely diverse forms of energy, picks up a certain number of aggregations of waves or rays, and does not pick up a vastly larger number of aggregations of waves or rays. In focusing, rays are excluded to get clearness. The smallest rays known, the gamma rays of radium, measure about one fifty-millionth of a millimetre from crest to crest; the longest rays known measure twelve kilometres from crest to crest; the rays known to have been perceived constitute one forty-thousand millionth of that range. Our experience is a net in an ocean of potential experiences: very many pass through it unobstructed and unobserved.

If we look at a great fire through coloured glass, we see pillars, lintels and cross-beams crumble and fade. If we look at the fire without coloured glass, we see the fire filling the spaces that were blank before. If a being looked down on a town as scientists look through the microscope, he could observe regular pulses in and out, morning and evening, with a different pulse every seventh day. The regularity would be great: and yet we know the constituents have free will.

The universe of life apparently consists of a vast number of centres of feeling and striving. The 'objective' world is how these monads have so far learnt to interpret the rest of the universe. There has been, and there is, a struggle for a *modus vivendi* among them. There are the inherited habits of beings, some relatively fixed, some less fixed, and some hardly formed: there are infinite possibilities of adaptation and change. The 'natural' means that which is fixed or relatively fixed, that which we are familiar with, or which comes to us in forms mediated through familiar forms: the 'supernatural' is existence which has not been assimilated in this way to our apprehension.

In the mind of the living being are

(1) the unconscious verging into the subconscious, the

living mind which is the accumulated, epitomized experience from the whole ancestry below the level of the waking mind;

- (2) the conscious, the waking mind, which deals with the experience of which we are ordinarily conscious;
- (3) an unconscious, verging into a subconscious, through which new experience, it may be of higher kinds, comes.

"The brain", wrote Robert Bridges, "is a mechanical receiver of the essential activities of the universe-mind—a receiver which, as it was certainly fashioned in the process, grew up in mutual accordance with the universe to respond to its vibrations and translate them into human consciousness."

It was Wordsworth's philosophy that man is the apex of a pyramidal structure where the mind that permeates the whole emerges to the light of consciousness and, in the organism and mind of man, becomes the inheritor of manifestations from the base to the top of the pyramid. It is true that there is the problem of harmonizing the strata of instincts and inherited mind within us. We cannot live on the top storey only: we must from time to time descend to the lower levels we inherit; just as in a house, with its various levels and offices, the problem is to achieve as harmonious a use of the whole as possible in relation to the highest uses. But the inherited house we are speaking of is a living house, capable of indefinite, if, in some parts, slow progress.

The real self is not the body or the mind or both, but that which operates through body and mind. Is it not true that the real personality can progress not only through progress of body and mind, but also through rising superior to their limitations? Is there not here a verifiable spiritual life?

We are of the universe, and we must be of it not only physically and mentally, but also spiritually. "From 'the power behind the sun' comes the evolution of life and mentality, no less than that of the material universe."¹ At the central core of the volcano is the core of life. That which now lies at the base of the mountain, which bulks so largely, is the more superficial aspect of the universe, that which came out first, and as

¹ SIR LEONARD HILL in "The Listener." December 10th, 1942.

the mountain ascends, and the extent of the strata diminishes greatly, and the tempo of development increases rapidly, the universe is turning inside out, the deeper nature of reality is revealed. At the top so far attained, *i.e.*, in the highest human beings at their best, we see the inmost nature of the universe we have so far attained to. We can say that what we have discovered of abiding worth is true apprehension, so far as it goes, of the nature of ultimate reality; the perimeter at the top is closer to the central core than the rest of the mountain is.

It would appear that the purpose of the world is the development of personality. By being exposed to real risks and responsibility, beings have the opportunity to grow. From the central core of life come impulses—sustained impulses—to the real values. Centres take to good courses, centres take to bad courses, and the results are before us. For the purpose of developing personality, it can be maintained without fear of refutation that no better universe could be imagined than the one we know, in which the values themselves alone are the sole guaranteed reward. The purpose of the universe, so far as we can become acquainted with it, would appear to be the voluntary attainment and realization of the values experienced as truth, goodness and beauty by centres of consciousness. Probably there has been no inspiration within the present century so great as that given by G. B. Shaw. In "Man and Superman" he found the ideal being to be "he who seeks in contemplation to discover the inner will of the world, in invention to discover the means of fulfilling that will, and in action to do that will by the so-discovered means". Many have been inspired by the teaching that there is divinity waiting to be born and that we can have part in bringing it to birth, that what happens to us does not matter so much as what happens through us. "As long as I can conceive something better, I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence, or clearing the way for it." Real progress cannot come by externals of any kind alone, but only through the development of men and women. A gentleman is one through whom more is put into life than he takes out of it. In the preface to "Man and Superman", Shaw wrote words that have become proverbial: "This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one". In a letter

to Tolstoy he wrote, "The man who believes there is a purpose in the universe and identifies his own purposes with it and makes the achievement of that purpose an act of self-realization; that is the effective and happy man". "That there is a holy spirit," wrote Samuel Butler, "and that it does descend on those that diligently seek it, who can for a moment question?" The purpose of the universe, so far as we can apprehend it, would appear to be the voluntary attainment and realization of truth, goodness and beauty.

RELIGION AND THE SCIENTIFIC CHALLENGE

The dissemination of popular scientific teaching has led to the idea that religion is a mere survival of outworn habits of thought. We hold that scientific and religious views are not ultimately incompatible. The kind of religion we seek to defend is one in which truth has always been regarded as fundamental and scientific methods have been followed wherever they were applicable.

The dispute which followed the publication of Darwin's theory, though partly due to the conservatism of religious people, owed much of its violence to the over-enthusiasm with which certain scientists sought to establish the law of the jungle as the necessary condition of human progress. The religious interpretation of evolution as purposeful means that the evolutionary process as seen by man indicates a pattern, and not that such a pattern is discoverable throughout.

Dialectical Materialism is a truer account of reality than the Mechanistic Materialism which preceded it. Yet religious ideas have survived in spite of radical changes in methods of production. Knowledge is not merely utilitarian, but is also an end in itself demanding satisfaction alongside man's material needs. Spiritual experience can neither be denied nor ignored.

ANY attempt to expound religious ideas as valid for the modern world is certain to be received with suspicion by many intelligent people. The idea is widely held that religion is based upon out-of-date habits of thought which can no longer be defended because they conflict with modern science. In so far as such a conflict exists, or is believed to exist, it is natural that science should seem to offer more hope of contributing to human satisfaction than religion. It has already transformed the world for good and evil, and it seems destined to be even more potent in future. Scientific theories are bearing year after year the fruits of successful prediction and material achievement. Religion, on the other hand, seems stagnant and unfruitful. Most of its teachers still refer to ancient scriptures as the sources of such wisdom as they possess, while the world order shows no sign of approximating to the Kingdom of God.

It would certainly be a disaster if mankind were deprived of the promise of material prosperity offered by modern science either as a result of scientific warfare or through the triumph of a powerful anti-scientific ideology or religion. But are we compelled to choose between science and religion? Many thousands of people, including some of the most eminent scientists, would regard it as equally disastrous if we were compelled to abandon religion.

One of the chief difficulties of investigating the possibility of a reconciliation between science and religion is that of deciding what scientists do in fact believe. Science is primarily a method of investigation applied to a large number of types of phenomena or activity. The method by which all these studies are linked is realized through a great variety of techniques. Every year not only new facts are discovered, but also new phenomena and activities are brought within range of scientific investigation, new sub-divisions of phenomena acquire the status of separate sciences, and new techniques are brought to the study of old problems. Thus there accumulates a mass of scientific results which has no unifying characteristic except that it all deals with some aspect of the material world. No single scientist claims to know in detail more than a fraction of this work. The intelligent inquirer not trained in science is baffled by the fact that the objects of scientific investigation are not those of everyday life, but abstractions which often have no meaning for him, and are represented by symbols deriving their precision from having been devised for the special purpose. Many scientists show little interest in the wider implications either of their own special studies or of science as a whole, and the writings of those who do, make it clear that fundamental disagreements exist among them. In these circumstances it is not strange that members of the Commission should differ in their estimate of current scientific tendencies. Two papers are therefore offered: one of them, to be found in Part III, is based on the view that the most up-to-date results of science are favourable to religion, while the present essay assumes that the most characteristic philosophy of contemporary scientists is what is called Dialectical Materialism.

If science has its disagreements, so also has religion. Indeed, so varied are the teachings put forward in the name of religion

that it is impossible to defend any of them without at least by implication rejecting others. It seems advisable, therefore, to draw attention to a number of the characteristics of the kind of religion for which we stand. We hope that the present Report taken as a whole will give the reader a fairly adequate outline of our position, but certain points are of special importance for our immediate purpose.

One of these is that the churches to which we belong have in the past been honourably associated with the scientific movement. It is now generally recognized that in the eighteenth century, when science was largely neglected in the older universities, its chief centres were the dissenting academies. Joseph Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen, was one of our ministers. Charles Darwin belonged to a Unitarian family. Next it may be noted that we have long stood for the idea that religious doctrines must be subjected to the judgment of reason. We have applied all the rational methods at our disposal to the study of the scriptures—textual and source criticism, archaeological research and the comparative study of religion—in fact, we have used all the methods open to the secular historian, and rejected doctrines and historical beliefs which failed to stand the test. Moreover we have not only done this in the study and the theological college, but have regarded it as the proper basis for the regular preaching of our ministers. We have always considered a special regard for truth to be the justification of our existence as a separate religious body, and for its sake have incurred persecution in the past and a considerable measure of ostracism to-day. Lastly, we are united to the scientific movement by our refusal to subscribe to any credal test. We are seekers of truth, of absolute truth; yet we are at one with Engels, the chief prophet of Marxist Materialism, when he says that “The knowledge which has an unconditional claim to truth is realized in a series of relative errors”. As an illustration of the importance attached to this freedom from dogma it may be mentioned that when the present Report was first proposed there was some objection on the ground that it might come to be used as a standard of orthodoxy. This was not the intention either of the proposer or of any member of the Commission. It would be unreasonable if belief in the essentially progressive character of science were used to prevent

the publication of present results. It is in this tentative spirit that the work has been undertaken. As seekers of truth in the province of religion we welcome any understanding of the universe science can achieve. In offering any criticism of scientific theory we shall fail in our duty if we do so in the name of any sacrosanct religious preconception. Our only legitimate concern is with its truth. We can now proceed to examine certain theories in respect of which religious views have been supposed to be rendered obsolete by science.

EVOLUTION

All but the most obscurantist religious bodies now accept some theory of evolution. The kind of interpretation favoured will be found in the paper in Part III. (“A Note on Nature and Man.” Pp. 202–206.) Two points require further discussion here.

The first is that some scientific writers point to the hostility with which Darwin's views were first received as evidence of the essentially reactionary character of religious thought. The fault, however, was by no means all on one side. Some Darwinians based on the idea of the struggle for existence a description of nature exclusively in terms of ruthless competition. Darwin himself safeguarded his position by including in the struggle for existence all the means adopted by an organism to secure survival, co-operative as well as competitive. The kind of view put forward by Thomas Huxley in his famous lecture on “Evolution and Ethics” was bound to shock religious people who held the universe to be in some sense a divine creation. But that view was not only shocking—it was also so one-sided as to be untrue. It would probably be very hard to find a contemporary biologist of repute who would defend it. The next step, which Huxley certainly did not take, was to argue that in the struggle for existence so conceived lay a necessary condition of progress, and that man could progress only if he resorted to the same ruthless individualism. This idea was at once more plausible and more dangerous because it fitted in with the economic assumptions of nineteenth-century capitalism. Modern biologists not only do more justice to the principle of co-operation in nature; they also recognize that

man is concerned with a different stage in biological evolution and that degeneration rather than progress would be the result of an attempt to return to the conditions appropriate to an earlier stage. That controversy has passed away, but its effect has certainly not been to brand religious values as obsolete.

The other difficulty in evolutionary theory is concerned with the presence or absence of purpose. Scientists generally refuse to entertain the idea of purpose in evolution. In so far as this is due to a desire to stand aloof from philosophical issues, religion is left free to interpret the facts in its own way. It is clear, however, that many scientists mean more than that: they hold that the view that evolution has a purpose is untenable. The affirmation of purpose means one or both of two things. One interpretation is that all living beings behave in a manner inexplicable apart from the idea of purpose. Certainly the natural way of describing human behaviour involves that idea. Behaviour of a similar kind is found in other higher animals. There is no agreement, however, as to how far back we can find evidence of purpose in the behaviour of less developed forms of life. Sir J. Arthur Thomson drew a distinction between behaviour which is purposeful and that which is merely purposive. On the whole, interpreters favourable to religion tend to insist on purpose as characteristic of all life, while scientists of a materialistic type regard it as more limited. But is this controversy really important? Undoubtedly it used to be. Until recently a mechanistic form of materialism was fashionable among scientists. They held that the higher forms of life differed from the lower in nothing but complexity, and exhibited no new characteristics. On this view, purpose was to be found at every stage of evolution or not at all. Religious apologists accepted that assumption. They were convinced, nevertheless, of the reality of purpose in man, and that led them to argue that it must be present in a concealed form from the outset. Mechanistic materialism has now ceased to be fashionable, and the assumption common to both sides is now generally rejected. The current view recognizes different levels of organization in a continuous development. The passage from a lower to a higher level does not involve the introduction of some wholly new factor of a mystical kind, lying outside the scope of naturalistic description, but it does

involve the appearance of new characteristics such that the categories appropriate to a lower level are no longer adequate for the description of the higher. From one point of view it is asserted that there is no essential difference between living and lifeless matter; certain viruses cannot with confidence be assigned to either class. Yet to be fully alive is to possess certain characteristics not found in lifeless matter. On this view the rejection of purpose in the description of lower organisms does not in the least imply its rejection as unreal in the higher animals, and man in particular. There is no inherent reason why the existence of living beings which display no sign of purposive behaviour should be more disturbing to religion than the existence of lifeless matter.

The other application of purpose consists in the idea that the evolutionary process as a whole was initiated in order to achieve a given end. This is an adaptation of the ideas expressed in the Biblical creation stories. There purpose is assumed in a form which now seems naïve. The sun was created to give light by day, and the moon and stars for the night. In the light of what is now known of stellar evolution, few religious people would speak in that way to-day. Yet the creation story remains true in so far as it means that the existence of a being such as man gives significance to a natural order which without it seems blind and futile. So it is with biological evolution. It is true that the process was indirect, and that instances of degeneration were more common than those of progress. The story of evolution does not read like the working out of a purpose by an intelligent and omnipotent being. But our world as it was supposed to be before the idea of evolution was accepted was also not exactly what might have been expected on the theory that it was created by such a being. Religion could never have maintained its hold on the allegiance of intelligent men if it had affirmed that God was at all points victorious; it affirms merely that He will be so. How that can be remains a mystery, but the emergence of a conscious being capable of winning freedom through the knowledge of necessity supplies a clue to the answer.

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

It is curious that a number of scientists profess as their philosophy a doctrine which was designed as an interpretation of history, and not of reality as a whole. There is little in the writings of Marx upon which a theory of science can be based. "The value of Marxism", says J. D. Bernal, himself a Marxist, "is as a method and a guide to action, not as a creed and a cosmogony." Yet J. B. S. Haldane has devoted a book to the elucidation of the bearing of Dialectical Materialism upon science. For this purpose he uses the work of Engels and Lenin. Marxism has advantages over the mechanistic materialism of the last century. Applying the dialectical method to natural history, it discovers a series of syntheses, each of which marks the emergence of something new. Bernal regards it as one of the chief merits of the theory that it enables science to cope with those types of phenomena in which novelty is present. Again, whereas the older view conceived matter in a way which is inconsistent with modern physics, Marxism, as interpreted by Lenin, is not open to the same objection. "The sole property of matter", he says, "with the recognition of which Materialism is vitally connected, is the property of being objective reality, of existing outside our cognition." This is obviously most unsatisfactory as an account of matter, but it states something which science for its purpose is justified in postulating. Similarly, the observation of Engels that "The world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made things, but as a complex of processes", accords with a recent tendency in science which may be said to have begun with the idea of evolution and to be displayed in its most developed forms in current physics and Quantum Mechanics. Nevertheless it may be doubted whether Marxism makes any contribution to the philosophy of science apart from its theory of human history. It merely embodies certain assumptions which were already involved in scientific thought. As a philosophy of science there is no point at which the theory requires criticism from the side of religion. It asserts the priority of matter over mind, but this need not be rejected in so far as the reference is to the order of their appearance in time.

It is otherwise when we turn to the centre of the theory,

i.e., the Materialist Conception of History. Even this is not open to objection as "a method and a guide to action". It can hardly be denied that Marx's teaching made an important contribution to the study of history, and in recent times we find men like M. Weber, E. Troeltsch and R. H. Tawney working out the connection between religion and the rise of capitalism. It is quite legitimate to isolate one factor in history as having special relevance to the current political situation and as suggesting a particular line of action. It is quite another thing to exalt such a theory to the status of a philosophy by which the value of all civilized activities is to be judged. On this view the really important aspects of history are changes in the methods of production and the struggle of classes to get or to keep possession of them. All the operations of the mind are to be understood as expressions of these basic facts. Such validity as they possess vanishes when the economic circumstances which gave rise to them are changed. The consistent Marxist is bound to apply this principle to Materialism itself. "The most that a Marxist can say for Marxism", says Haldane, "is that it is the best and truest philosophy that could have been produced under the social conditions of the mid-nineteenth century." To accept this view would be to abandon the religious outlook altogether. Religion claims to be, among other things, an apprehension of reality. That apprehension is limited in many ways by the nature of our individual minds. In the light of psycho-analysis it is at least questionable whether the limits to which Marxism draws attention are among the most important. To say that is not to deny their reality. Religion has to find expression in keeping with the conditions of society in which it exists, but it does not owe its existence to them. It exists primarily because of the impact of a real spiritual order upon the minds of men. Christianity has existed inside several distinct social systems, from the agricultural civilization of ancient Palestine to the present phase of Western capitalism. It is easy to detect in its institution and ideas the influence of these varying conditions, but its central witness has persisted through them all and cannot plausibly be derived from them.

The fallacy of Materialism, however, is not confined to its theory of what is generally understood by religion. It applies

to its treatment of knowledge as a whole. Engels did not reject the idea of absolute truth, but materialists often speak in a way which implies that rejection. It is probably true that the chief reason why Marxism is attractive to scientists to-day is to be found in the fact that it relates their work to the development of society. The function of science, according to Marxism, is to put the resources of the material world at the disposal of society. Scientists are deeply disturbed not only by the anti-social use to which their energies and results are at present diverted, but also by the lopsided development of science, which they attribute to the nature of capitalism. They believe that scientific progress has always been the product of social necessity. A society which sets out to provide the highest possible standard of living for all its members is bound, they hold, to make fuller use of science than one which is content so long as a privileged few enjoy prosperity and leisure. A ruling class will have a culture of a sort as a means of occupying its leisure, and also to distinguish its members from other people. But the kind of knowledge it will value will be useless knowledge, the acquisition of which will not endanger its position by producing social change. Thus a sharp distinction is drawn between useful knowledge, which leads to social change, and useless knowledge, which does not. Greek culture, for example, is condemned because it belonged to a society maintained by slavery. Platonism, it is said, exalted contemplation because its purpose was to minister to the leisure of the slave-owning class rather than to improve the lot of the masses. It will be remembered, however, that the philosopher of Plato's Republic was to forsake contemplation in order to make his wisdom available for the State. Philosophy is condemned because it is an activity of the intellect which makes no difference to the material world or the condition of society. Exponents of these views are fond of deriding the idea that knowledge is an end in itself. That idea does not mean that it is to be ranked above other human ends. The cultivation of the individual mind is not to be preferred to the health of society. Religion does not think of men as mere intellectuals, but as persons, and it values most that knowledge which enables men to live nobly and harmoniously. It is all to the good that scientists should be concerned that their work should

yield the greatest possible service to society. There is nothing wrong with the pursuit of knowledge as a means to good ends. But it is never merely a means: it is an end in two senses. No theory or doctrine can be justified on any ground if it does not fulfil the condition of being true. Such a statement might have seemed a truism in the recent past, but to-day we find scientists, under the influence of materialistic habits of thought, using language not obviously consistent with it. "I cannot think of any form of legitimate instruction", said Lancelot Hogben in an address to the Institute of Adult Education, "in which it is the business of the teacher to give an unbiased view on controversial questions." There is, of course, a certain truth in this. As C. H. Waddington puts it: "Science is not ethically neutral." Even if we are thinking of a discipline such as history, it is not an advantage when it sheds no light on current practical problems. Nevertheless, the moment any consideration of utility is used as an excuse for misrepresenting the truth, the teaching is not only useless, but mischievous. Secondly, knowledge is an end in the sense that when all that can be done has been done to satisfy man's material needs, he will remain fundamentally dissatisfied without it. His desire to find meaning and not chaos exists along with his desire for food, shelter and clothing, and cannot in any way be reduced to the latter. That is part of the final justification of religion. Man feels himself to be a spiritual being. He inhabits and is part of a material world, and he cannot be indifferent to the material conditions in which he lives. But there is that within him which stretches out beyond the limits of that world and still discovers reality. He desires a knowledge and a communion which cannot be furnished by any material means.

What, then, is our attitude to science? We recognize the need for many fundamental changes in man's way of life, and are bound to accept gratefully the new means of controlling his environment which science can bring. We are grateful to science for its contribution to the understanding of the natural order by which truth has been advanced. We insist that the scientific method must be applied to religion itself in so far as it is concerned with statements capable of rational verification. But the success of science has been largely due to its method of isolation. If, in pursuance of that method, we are asked to

deny the reality or the validity of spiritual experience, we must answer that science in making that demand is stepping outside its province. If we are merely asked to ignore such things, we must answer that to do so may be convenient for certain special purposes, but that from the standpoint of ultimate truth they cannot be ignored.

TRUTH, GOODNESS AND BEAUTY

Scientists recognize the obligation to serve high ideals. They have at least one "absolute" value—Truth. The source of this sense of obligation is not any particular religion, for it transcends all barriers of race, place and religions.

There are other ideals and values also—Goodness and Beauty. And ultimately these three are inter-related. Each demands the others.

The source of these values cannot be discovered by analysis. Man's quest for Truth, Goodness and Beauty cannot be derived from anything else, for it is part of the nature of man and the Universe. The fact that our apprehension of them is limited and imperfect does not imply that they are merely subjective.

To admit the existence of these absolute values leads logically to belief in God. Belief in God is necessary as the ground of their objectivity. God not only exists, but acts upon us, and through us upon the material world. And it is the realization of values in the natural order which makes the difference between chaos and cosmos.

MAN'S RECOGNITION OF ABSOLUTE VALUES

IN 1941 the British Association for the Advancement of Science held an international conference of scientists who issued a declaration of which the following is part: "Men of science are among the trustees of each generation's inheritance of natural knowledge. They are bound, therefore, to foster and increase that heritage by faithful guardianship and service to high ideals." In this there are some points to be noted. The scientists declare that they are trustees, *i.e.*, persons to be trusted. They are bound to foster and increase the heritage by faithful guardianship and service to high ideals. What is implied? What binds scientists to be faithful, to service to high ideals? These scientists acknowledge the existence of a moral, spiritual obligation—in the words of Burke, light as air, but strong as iron. Science, we see, is not based on a hard, material universe, but on this intangible bond. The sole

repository of truth on this planet is not a book, not a society, but truthful men and women. What is the inspiration to be truthful, to seek truth, defend it, spread it, stand by it?

It is perhaps all the more impressive that what binds scientists to be faithful to the service of high ideals is not any particular historic religion. The pursuit of truth existed, of course, before the Christian era, and it is only right to recognize the part played by liberal Islam in taking over from Nestorian Christianity and India, Persia and China, science and philosophy and literature and developing them in its great civilization, which slowly percolated into Christendom and led to the enfranchisement of the mind in the seventeenth century and later. The scientific conscience, like the artistic, transcends all barriers of race, place and religion. Is there not a connexion between these forms of conscience and the moral conscience as more commonly recognized?

As we have just indicated, there are ideals other than loyalty to truth. The international aspect of these loyalties is itself one of them. When a scientist discovers truth, he is expected to publish it so that it can be verified by anyone and to make a free gift of it to the world. If religion were to become inter-religious, then the representatives of all religious bodies would be on the same basis as the scientists.

But here our laudation of science must end, and be replaced by criticism. There are still other ideals—of morality, compassion, love. Can it be said that science is controlled by them? Suppose science were controlled by them and to these controls were added beauty, and all of us came under all these controls, what a different world this would be!

All the theses that have been brought forward to demonstrate irrationality in the universe were discovered by reason. We cannot respect a theory that makes the mind that found it nonsense. Similarly with goodness. What is good? To this there is no answer but that of individual experience and judgment, tested by those of the developed and instructed portion of mankind. And so also with beauty. Nothing is known as true, good or beautiful unless it is judged so from within. The sole revelation of goodness is when it is incarnated, and beauty is not known but by the soul. These three values are necessary, and they are ultimately necessary to each

other. To win truth, goodness (at least in the sense of moral loyalty to truth) is necessary. Beauty is not sound unless it is also true, and again goodness is necessary—as loyalty to beauty. Goodness is not sound unless it is instinct with truth and has the grace of beauty. The values are united in one living spirit.

Wherever there has been life that has responded to it, there progress has taken place. The spiritual experience of all the world that matters reveals a call to live morally. No explanation of this has been discovered: it has not been explained by the herd instinct, or social experience, or anything else. It rests on direct experience which is self-authenticating. He who has it consciously has faith in these absolute and eternal values against which, he holds, nothing can be set and nothing is of any weight, neither his own life nor the life of others. This is expressed in the great symbols of self-sacrifice and the certitude of resurrection. "I marvel," Sir Arthur Keith has written, "not that one man should disagree with another concerning the ultimate realities of life, but that so many, in spite of the diversities of their inborn natures, should reach so large a measure of agreement."

Can a universe which brought into being and implanted in its creatures the desire for reason be itself unreasonable? Can it have implanted the desire for justice and be itself unjust? Can it call forth affections and have none? The man most worthy of esteem is not the man of intellect alone, nor of efficiency alone, nor yet the poet, nor the philosopher, nor the statesman: he is the man who loves not beauty alone, nor truth alone, nor yet goodness alone: but the three in their wholeness—grace, wisdom and truth combined.

In this doctrine of the trinity of truth, goodness and beauty ancient words are true. These three are one. It bids us stand by what we consider right, regardless of the esteem or reproach of our fellow-men; it upbraids our cowardice if we allow our fears or our deference to public opinion to shake our loyalty to truth, goodness and beauty: it demands our undivided allegiance to them even in face of the whole community. It makes us aim at the good of all individuals, and for the sake of a single individual to challenge the community. It is the spirit which makes music more than noise, love more than liking, and religion more than righteousness: it is the spirit

which, persistently pursued, prevails in the end, as rain over rock, as snowflakes over mountains.

ABSOLUTE VALUES AND GOD

If we admit the existence of absolute values, what bearing have they upon belief in God? Is belief in God an inference from them?

Certainly it is not so in an historic sense. It is probably true that there is no extant philosophy older than Platonism in which the values could be made the basis of such an inference, while religion is prehistoric. If, however, the question asked is whether such a philosophy leads logically to belief in God, the answer is that it does.

Before indicating the nature of such an inference it may be well to consider an objection. It is sometimes argued that such words as "Good" are merely emotive and have no objective validity. We apply the word, it is said, to many objects which have nothing in common except that we feel similarly about them. But the use of words is not arbitrary. The very possibility of distinguishing the various uses of the word suggests an objective basis. The language of philosophy is necessarily more precise than common speech. In everyday life we may loosely apply the word good to a musical composition, a historical essay, or even a plum pudding. In the first instance we probably mean that it is beautiful, in the second that its thesis is true, and in the last we are using the word in a derivative sense for pleasant. It is not contended that the enumeration of Truth, Beauty and Goodness as absolute values is more than a convenient abstraction. Before an act can be called good there must be a judgment about the nature of the situation which belongs to the realm of truth. Nor does belief in the objectivity of the values imply the validity of all our value-judgments. When we call something good we believe that the judgment has a meaning, but we recognize that our knowledge is limited and our apprehension of values imperfect. It is possible to conceive a being free from such limitation and imperfection. When we say that something is absolutely good we mean that our judgment would be endorsed by such a being—that is to say, by God.

Is God, then, merely a philosophical abstraction? Not at all. Belief in God is necessary as the ground of the objectivity of values. That objectivity is revealed not only in the contemplation of the philosopher, but also in the actions of ordinary men, and especially of those men whom we judge to have lived most significantly. The martyr who dies for his faith because it seems to him to be true and the hero who gives his life in doing what seems to him good bear witness to the values not as objects of philosophic contemplation, but as compelling powers. The compulsion, however, is of an unusual kind. Other compulsions take advantage of our weakness, while the compulsion of the values is the measure of our spiritual strength and insight. Other compulsion limits our freedom and could not operate without it. Thus we are led to think of God not only as existing, but also as acting upon us and through us upon the material world.

That is one of the basic principles of a religious view of reality. The other is the idea of God as in some sense Creator of the universe. It is not necessary to regard that idea as appropriate to a scientific description of the processes by which the universe assumed its present form, but in some sense it must be true. The idea of values enables us to solve this problem. It is the realization of values in the natural order which makes the difference between chaos and cosmos. That realization, though imperfect, is not in doubt. In so far as the universe is intelligible, in so far as it is a universe at all, there is evidence of the actuality of truth. Beauty, also, is lavishly distributed in the natural world. Most of all, when there appears in the universe a being capable of judging in terms of value, capable of using the resources of the material world to serve good ends and to create beauty, the triumph of order over chaos is not far off, the Kingdom of God is at hand.

MAN AND GOD

The Free Religious thinker enlarges and universalizes the idea of Revelation; all genuine religious insight and discovery is revealed. This view opposes the assumption that the Christian revelation is unique, final and complete.

The appeal of orthodox Christianity is to authority vested in Bible or Church. In the view here presented, revelation is mediated through personality, continuously but never infallibly. Authority is inward and is subject to rational control. God 'speaks' through man's natural endowments, conscious and sub-conscious. Immediacy requires its safeguards and tests. Conscience may be warped, or it may merely reflect a prevailing cultural pattern or convention. There is need then to distinguish between conscience, which changes with time and place, and intuition as authoritative. Genuine intuition is spiritual awareness, a bridge between God and man, a source of spiritual knowledge which intellect clothes and interprets.

REVELATION

THE free religious thinker does not reject the idea of revelation; he accepts it, but enlarges and universalizes it. The distinction between revealed religion and natural religion he regards as artificial and as savouring of the miraculous. To him all genuine religion, every religious insight, discovery of truth and divine apprehension, is revelational; there is, he claims, no "religion without revelation", since every achievement of the human mind is God's inspiration through man.

This view arises out of his conception of God's relationship with man. He thinks of God not as the "wholly other", but as in some measure immanent in the created world and confluent with our humanity. This initial assumption is crucial and is definitely opposed to the contention, wherever it arises, that between God and man, between nature and super-nature, there exists a chasm which man is powerless to bridge.

According to the Barthian view, God is totally separate from man; therefore no ascensus on man's part can avail to raise man to the level of God, man's rôle being abjectly passive,

revelation is an act of God, a descensus from above, God's lowering of Himself that He may raise mankind—or such members of the human family as He may elect to uplift.

This view we reject. Since, we hold, there is community of nature between God and man, we may further assume an ascensus towards God as well as a descensus from God. And the two movements are one movement: man is capable of discovering God because of the divine agency that is within him. On this view, revelation assumes a broader and richer meaning, embracing all human endeavour towards fullness of life. Man—product of Nature and son of God—can attain through his natural endowments to a knowledge of God. God is the knowledge he seeks; God is in the seeker himself.

In making this stand we note how in recent years even traditional theologians have come to recognize (as did the early Christian Fathers) some degree of revelation, however meagre and ill-defined, in the pre-Christian religions. Since the rise of the historical and comparative study of religion it suffices no longer to dismiss every manifestation of the religious spirit outside the Christian context as heathenish, man-made and false. A compromise is therefore reached by representing the religions of antiquity as partial and preparatory revelations culminating in Christianity, which is the complete and final revelation superseding all others.

Thus the old and rigid distinction between natural religion and revealed religion has been broken down, and most modern apologists have extended the idea of revelation to embrace at least the loftiest teachings of the non-Christian Faiths. An exception is the Barthian, H. Kraemer, who, in his book "The Christian Message in a non-Christian World", refuses to accord any revelational value to the "pagan" religions. Even so, the distinction remains, in a modified form. The Hebrew religion, it is said, culminates in the supreme revelation of the New Testament; the Christian revelation is unique. We are thus presented with a primary and infallible revelation embodied in the Christian religion and with the secondary and subsidiary revelations of the non-Christian Faiths. It is further assumed that the Christian revelation is final and complete. The questions arise: Can these assertions be substantiated? On what grounds do they rest?

AUTHORITY

The appeal of orthodox Christianity is to authority, but when we explore the grounds of authority and the reasons advanced in behalf of it, we find that the basal appeal is to faith—not to faith in a revealing God, but to faith in a pre-supposition that the Christian revelation embodies a deposit of doctrine bearing the impress of truth so unmistakably that we may say, "Here beyond all doubt is an authoritative presentation of divine truth which all men must perforce believe". If we ask why we must believe that this deposit of doctrine bears the hall-mark of absolute truth, we are directed to the evidences of revelation in the Bible, or to the guardian of revelation, the Church. In other words, while rational grounds are advanced for theism, and such corollaries of Christian conviction as the practice of prayer, the central fact of the orthodox Christian faith, the doctrine of the Incarnation, rests not on rational grounds, but on faith that at a particular period in history God revealed Himself fully and finally as the Incarnate Word. Hence the Christian revelation is intrinsically authoritative, to be accepted or rejected according to an inward grace and one's capacity to find in the Church or the Bible sufficing evidence of its authority and truth.

Yet it is highly improbable that anybody who was not already acquainted with the doctrine of Incarnation would learn of it from the Christian Scriptures alone, uninfluenced by the heritage of doctrine conveyed to him through the creeds of the Church. Only when the Bible is read, as it usually is, in the light of post-biblical interpretation, does it reveal the substance of the doctrine which the Christian is expected to profess. Its authority is derivative.

Even so, or perhaps because of this, the Protestant's assumption that every believer may interpret Scripture for himself as the Spirit guides him has led to interpretations and claims so diverse and conflicting, and sometimes so extravagant, that the appeal to the authority of Scripture has lost its former weight and cogency. Modern critical research has produced a sounder evaluation of the worth and use of the sacred text.

How far the Bible retains its authority is not for us, under this head, to determine. What must be noted is the shift of

emphasis in recent decades from reliance upon the authority of an institution or book to acceptance of the authority of the conscience and reason of man himself. This means, in effect, the logical working out of the fundamental Protestant principle (which Reformation theology only partially perceived) that every believer is his own priest, endowed with the responsibility of interpreting, in the light of conscience and reason, the doctrine he inherits from his forerunners in the Faith. Religious truth is accepted not only because the Church or the Bible commends it, or is presumed to commend it. That is true which conscience affirms and reason validates. Authority is inward.

This view of authority, which we unreservedly maintain, needs clarifying. Recent years have shown a reaction against it, partly, we believe, because its fundamental axioms are misunderstood, and partly because modern man, appalled by the diversity of tongues, seeks security of conviction at any price. This the Church can give him—if he is prepared to pay. We speak for those who are not, and to them we say that no authority is absolute. In exalting an inward over an external authority we make no pretension that it provides precise and ready-made answers to every question a man may ask. It supplies us with no secure and unshakable system of belief; what it does give us is guidance for living and believing, a sense of significance and responsibility (since it is our conscientious and rational judgment that is involved), a faith which shirks no rational test or verification, and a richer and profounder view of revelation than a closed orthodoxy can ever provide.

INSPIRATION

We often speak of a document as inspired. The Epistle to the Romans, we say, is inspired. By this we mean that the epistle bears the impress of inspiration, that it embodies verbally the inspiration of the apostle who wrote it. Not the document itself, but the person behind it, out of whose mind it was born, is the vehicle of inspiration.

Thus we may say (1) that revelation is always personal. If dead words come to life again, it is because those who read them have within themselves the capacity to interpret them by

means of the quickening response of their own spiritual discernment.

It follows (2) that revelation is wrongly conceived in terms of information. This misconception—that revelation consists of divine deliverances of precise knowledge and precise instruction—is responsible for bibliolatry and for that gross literalizing of spiritual truth which is still the bane of certain types of Protestant theology. What the seers and the prophets reveal is not information, but truths and insights concerning God and man which later generations may approve and enrich.

Further, (3) revelation is not static, but continuous and incomplete. No particular revelation in the form in which it is couched is final, though particular revelations may embody elements of truth which are final in the sense that they are universally approved by the instructed judgment of man. Revelation is continuous because, on the human side, revelation is discovery, and man's discovery of the treasury of truth is never complete. To assume finality for a writer's utterance (merely because a sacred canon embodies it), or to assume the finality of any conciliar pronouncement (achieved through a majority vote), is to condemn future seekers to inspirational sterility. If the final Word is already spoken, if man need only hearken to a message that is already delivered, the search for truth becomes meaningless, for the truth is already made known. Rather do we affirm that revelation persists wherever there exist men and women with the will-to-discover and minds to apprehend new truths about the unceasing mystery of life. Truth cannot be appropriated; it has to be won. Truth cannot be possessed; it has to be sought for, and be re-interpreted from age to age in new symbolical forms.

It follows (4) that no revelation is infallible. Historical records show that there have always been inspired men and women in the world. Not every inspiration is genuine, and much that passes for inspiration is manifestly fanatical and false; but reason and common sense alike bear testimony to the universality of revelation. Inspiration is not confined to any locality or to the followers of any particular Way; it is not even confined to the professedly religious, as the annals of human achievement abundantly show. The Spirit bloweth where it listeth. Happily it sometimes clears the cobwebs

from our brains, enabling us to see how foolish is the presumption that the Spirit's inbreathing takes account of denominational labels and theological schools. Not all the world's great prophets spoke to Israel and Judah. Not all inspired sages belong to Christendom. Gautama and Sankara lived in India, Confucius in China, Socrates in Greece, Plotinus in Rome. No religion has a monopoly of mystics and saints. Inspiration—and hence revelation—is universal, nor can its channels be defined: the scientist—in these latter days triumphantly—mediates revelation no less than the prophet, the artist and the seer.

REASON

Rejecting, then, the authority of tradition, itself so variable in different epochs, we affirm the "inwardness" of authority. This claim we must now substantiate in the light of testimony and experience, enquiring first of all whether the authority of reason is an adequate alternative to the authority of tradition.

On grounds of reason we are required to accept any conclusion for which the evidence is so weighty, and presumably so trustworthy, that the conclusion is judged to be unavoidable and, therefore, rationally authoritative. The authority of reason is conceded only to the final conclusion of an inductive process, data and conclusion alike being subject to the verification of any person who is competent to observe and check them. The inductive, or scientific, method is invaluable in dealing with objective facts; the methods of science are founded upon it.

The question arises, however, whether this method is equally valuable and equally indispensable in dealing with data so non-observable and elusive (not repeatable at will) as the deliverances of the religious consciousness. It seems not, for these deliverances are neither self-evident nor subject to confirmation by experiment; they are not amenable to the scientific method, but it is an error to suppose that such deliverances are on this account irrational. Reason safeguards the objectivity of religion; religious interpretations are subject, like all else, to rational control; but religious experience itself is subjective, and this subjective element is of paramount importance. In

the following discussion we shall use the term "inner light" to connote, symbolically and comprehensively—but with no specific intellectual or ethical association—the personal or subjective nature of religious authority.

The questions confronting us are these. May we assume for the authority of the "inner light" a validity and absoluteness comparable with the validity and absoluteness we commonly accord to reason? Can false deliverances be distinguished from true? What is the nature of an intuition, and of conscience, and how are these related?

INNER LIGHT

The phrase "religious experience" is indeterminate and vague. How can experience be its own authority? Religious experience is notoriously a vast umbrella covering all manner of divergent responses from the shamanic trance to the humanist's loyalty to truth.

It is obvious, then, that we must try to single out some characteristic element or faculty in human nature which we may regard as the source or seat of authority. Taking the claimants at their name-value, we recall such terms as "voice", "daemon", "oracle", "immediacy", "inspiration", "conscience", "intuition", all denoting or suggesting the presence in personality of an authority, inflexible but not infallible, transcending the exercise of conceptual thought.

What can we make of these claimants, their dubious and conflicting imperatives and impeachments? When we bear in mind the fantastical revelations and flimsy infallibilities of pseudo-prophets, we incline to dismiss them, severally and collectively, as mere unconscious impulses clothed in fantasy, flooding the conscious mind and drowning the voice of reason. If this were all, then we were justified in our dismissal, and the problem were easily solved by recourse to the single word "fanaticism".¹ But it is not all.

The adjective "mere" is applied derogatively to the unconscious only by those who lack understanding of what this

¹ Incidentally this same fanaticism proves decisively that a subjective authority is no more infallible than an objective authority. A feeling of certitude is no substitute for truth.

hypothesis involves. Particular theories about the nature of the unconscious may be criticized and rejected (the Freudian theory, for example, is manifestly incompatible with any doctrine of divine revelation); the hypothesis itself is firmly established and indispensable to any psychological theory of how inspiration works. The theory of unconscious processes shows us, at least in part, how inspiration works.

In this matter it seems necessary to distinguish between the subconscious and the unconscious, and not to use them as though they were wholly synonymous terms. The subconscious, we may say, is private, the "region" of personal memories and repressions. The unconscious, however—in which the subconscious inheres—is more than individual, the "home" of collective or racial memory; it binds unitary life with unitary life.

Although it is no part of our purpose to commit ourselves or our readers to any one theory on this debatable subject, we wish to suggest: (1) That the idea of the unconscious is essential to an understanding not only of the basal instincts of human nature, but also of inspiration. The mind's creativity cannot be fully explained in terms of conscious intelligence exclusively. (2) That spiritual immediacy and the prophet's utterance, arising from an unconscious source, are mediated by normal, not miraculous, psychological processes. As we have no reason to assume a specific religious instinct to account for man's being "incurably religious", so we have no need to posit a specific superconsciousness (over and above and separate from the unconscious) to account for revelation.

Discussing this point, Bishop Gore saw no evidence to suggest that the message which Ezekiel and Paul delivered was "really—though they mistook its nature—the unconscious mind". Where, he adds, could the unconscious mind obtain these astonishing messages? The question, as Bishop Gore frames it, allows of no precise answer, but this at least we may say—and the records of inspiration amply support it—that, so far as we can see, no limits may be set to the "unconscious" creative powers in man; that to assume the message itself comes from God, supernaturally or superconsciously, is psychologically impermissible and in line with the "information" theory of revelation we have seen reason to reject (*supra*, p. 74). The

prophet's apprehension of a spiritual truth and his command to announce it—this, we may say, is the 'Voice' of God inwardly discerned; but this message which the prophet delivers (its verbal form, its percepts and concepts) is neither sacrosanct nor authoritative, and is subject to the standards of judgment we employ in assessing the worth of other statements not claiming to be inspired. God speaks through man's natural endowments—conscious and subconscious—through the exercise of cognitive faculty, but no less, more dramatically and spontaneously, through the uprushing announcements from the uncharted depths of the psychic stream.

If now we essay to substantiate the claims of a non-rational (but not anti-rational) inward authority, the first point to notice is that the sacred literature of Christendom assumes it, and the same could be said of the sacred writings of other traditions. They are fundamentally oracular. The Bible, in particular, speaks the language of inspiration: the prophet is addressed by a Voice—"Thus saith the Lord".

The prophet assumes the rôle of oracle, but through no virtue of his own: he is the mouthpiece of God. "The Jew addressed himself to men's intuitions and spoke in the language of inspiration. It is this", says H. L. Myers, "that has given Christ's utterances their unexampled power." ("The Root and the Flower." P. 443.) Jesus' utterance was not dialectical nor argumentative; it was declaratory. That is why he belongs to the prophetic tradition.

If we regard all inspirational speaking and writing as fantasy, and hence without authority, we block the springs of religious faith and transform many of the noblest figures of history into self-deluded morons. Our error would be singularly gross, for we owe to the prophets and seers (not alone to those in the Hebrew-Christian tradition) the sublimest insights ever achieved by man. What matter the legends attaching to their names? What does matter is (1) the intuition which the Voice symbolizes, and (2) the moral and spiritual quality of the utterance. On this test who can doubt that immediacy has its own power which the intellect can neither deny nor command? Only a mind that is blatantly opaque fails to see, through the smoke of exploded revelations, disclosures which are spiritually significant and sane.

CONSCIENCE AND INTUITION

In Martineau we find an inspired exponent of the inward light who nevertheless failed, we suggest, to drive his conclusions to their logical end. For Martineau, conscience is man's divinest gift. Conscience, he says, "gives no foresight of effects, but only insight into obligation at its source. But this it does with revelation so clear, so solemn, so consentaneous for all men, that those who will not own it to be divine can never find a voice of which it is the echo in our humanity". ("The Seat of Authority in Religion." P. 76.) To exalt conscience in this manner into a position of divine authority is, in our judgment, a questionable procedure.

Martineau could speak of "the presence of God in the conscience of mankind". That may be true. Whether or not it be true depends on what we mean by conscience. An instructed and disciplined conscience may be the Voice of God in a special and privileged sense; but conscience may also be the voice of convention, of ingrained prejudice or an ego-compulsion. Even Guy Fawkes may have had a conscience. A warped conscience signifies the absence, not the presence, of God. Modern psychologists offer a materialistic explanation of conscience, and what they say should be treated with respect. They point out that conscience is built up in early childhood, and is thus "a reflection of the old-established pattern of culture, particularly as that comes to be understood by the parents or guardians who influence the child, and are loved by it during the first six or seven years of its life". (R. B. Cattell: "Psychology and the Religious Quest." P. 35.)

Conscience on this view is neither more nor less divine than the instincts and sentiments which make up the total persona. Conscience reflects the prevailing cultural pattern. Behaviour concordant with the conscience of Elizabethan England is scarcely compatible with the conscience of the Great Victorians. Christian Britain, Hindu India and Muslim Arabia differ markedly on important points of conscience. What the youthful Nazi commends, his democratic counterpart condemns. Can we avoid the conclusion that what passes for conscience is very largely an artificial product subject to the impress of current morals and ideas? Facts like these leave

the idea of a universal conscience severely mauled; the "still small voice" becomes multilingual, and less and less divine.

Must we, then, entirely renounce the authority of conscience, conceding the psychologists' case in full, or is there an alternative conclusion capable of linking Martineau's interpretation with that of the critic, and doing justice to both? We believe that a possible solution lies in distinguishing between intuition, on the one hand, and the social conscience, on the other. If this be a true distinction, moral intuition may be thought of as the inner light outwardly and authoritatively reflected on to the field of action where questions of right and wrong arise. The conscience that is produced by inheritance and nurture is socially, but never spiritually, authoritative. With Martineau we may say of moral intuition that it is immediate and divine. Of the "secondary" conscience we may say with J. D. Beresford that it "may serve well enough to win worldly respect for our uprightness, but it is a bar to self-knowledge, a form of personal prejudice that has no eternal values". ("What I Believe." P. 52.) Each is authoritative, but only moral intuition is divinely authoritative, "the candle of the Lord".

We conclude, then, that the "secondary" conscience is the seat not of spiritual values, but of prejudice and personal promptings deriving from the body-mind complex; its morality is of the automatic kind: press the button and you get the answer, the same button always producing the same response. Moral intuition, on the other hand, is spiritual, and hence spontaneous in its deliverances, and genuinely authoritative. It is the source of genuine inspiration and guidance, commanding in the grand moments of its deliverance the concordant assent of the whole being.

Here we approach the intuitionist's most stupendous claim. "The soul", says Eckhart, "has something within it, a spark of supersensual knowledge that is never quenched. But there is also another knowledge within our souls which is directed toward outward objects: namely knowledge of the senses and the understanding: this hides that other knowledge from us. The intuitive higher knowledge is timeless and spaceless, without any here and now." (Quoted from R. Otto: "Mysticism East and West." P. 35.)

We are content to allow this testimony to speak for itself.

The reader will either accept it or not, and if he be sceptical of this immanentist claim and suspicious of even genuine and disciplined mysticism, no argument is likely to convince him. We can but suggest that if there be no confluence of human and divine, then human life loses all spiritual significance; the inner light, bereft of its authority, becomes a flickering after-gleam of our own all-too-human desires. Intuition, we would rather affirm, is spiritual awareness, the gate of revelation, the divine disclosure within the deepest spirit in man. If man were a completely insulated being wholly separate from God, the sense of obligation and the ideal of perfection would disturb him not at all. It is because the Divine light shines within him that he is disturbed—that he strives towards God. Eckhart's words find a modern echo in the confession of Rufus Jones: "I am firmly convinced that there is an unfathomable depth of inward Godlike being at man's spiritual centre which is the taproot of human self-consciousness and which is unsundered from this Over-world which we call God".

Quacks there may be, and deluded pietists who provoke the rationalists' ire by pretentious claims to "inside information" about supersensible realms. They take the name of intuition in vain, for the genuine intuitionist is no spiritual topographer. Intuitional knowledge, as Eckhart says, is "without any here and now"; it is the highest knowledge vouchsafed to man.

CONCLUSIONS

By way of summary, concluding this section, four points may be emphasized. (1) Intuition provides us with no ready-made and self-evident propositions, nor with precise instructions how we should behave or what we should believe in a given situation. It is declaratory, not specific; it announces, but supplies no programme; it says 'this way', but provides no itinerary; it says 'this is true', but leaves the experient to interpret the truth in terms of symbols and concepts. It matters not that one man's interpretation may differ intellectually from another's, nor is the immediacy of the experience invalidated by the diversity of the interpreters' symbols.

(2) Genuine intuition needs for its explanation the divine hypothesis or ground. Not otherwise can it be explained or

preserve its authority. Intuition is a bridge between man and God; it is where ascensus and descensus meet. An atheist who believes in, and acts upon, spiritual intuition is an atheist only in name.

(3) Intuition, so conceived, is not opposed to intellectual knowledge, as Bergson seems to suggest. It is a source of spiritual knowledge which intellect clothes and interprets. By means of the intellect we formulate, systematize and communicate truth, our symbols are concepts and our method is deliberate and logical. The symbols of intuition, however, are parables and myths, and by these alone can it endeavour to indicate its revelations to other minds, never with complete satisfaction, for intuition is spiritual perception, and perception is always 'private' and cannot be shared. Thus intellect comes, as it were, to the aid of intuition in formulating and communicating truth; they are not opposed, but co-operative. It is probable that no true philosophical construction, scientific "law" or religious dogma but has behind it, as its origin, an intuitive "flash". Intellect is an instrument of reason, and as such there falls to it the task of winnowing the wheat of genuine disclosures and intimations from the chaff of hard conventions and ego-compulsions. How often, though, does the intellect exercise itself, unprofitably, with pedestrian discursiveness! It needs the glow of inspiration to make it live, and inspiration is never purely intellectual; it is intuitional. But intuition, likewise, is reason's instrument. "An intuition which declines the test of reason", says J. L. Stocks, "is a moral and social offence." But genuine intuition is never irrational; rationality is one of the marks of its genuineness. There lies the test whereby true deliverances can be distinguished from false.

No higher authority is given under heaven than the authority in the innermost spirit of man. It is the source of inspiration, the agency of God's revelation to man.

MODERN PSYCHOLOGICAL OBJECTIONS TO THE REALITY OF A SPIRITUAL ORDER

There are three main types of objection :

1. *Behaviourism explains all "behaviour" (including mental) in terms of physical causation. This is an over-simplification.*

2. *Mechanistic Determinism reduces the human will to the level of the conditioned reflex. Religious emotions and impulses are certainly connected with cerebral mechanism, but this is no proof that all stimuli are of the material order.*

3. *Projection. The mind is asserted to project the concept of divine reality out of its own content. A projection, however, may either correspond to a reality, or be fanciful. The "idea" of Stalin in the mind of (a) a Communist, (b) a Tory, and (c) the British man-in-the-street, is in each case a mental projection not corresponding exactly to the real Stalin. There are also hallucinations, but the neurotic projection of a hallucinatory idea of God does not prove that every idea of God is hallucinatory.*

Religion transcends the level of animal instincts which are alleged to have produced it. The moral achievements of religious men and women indicate the reality of spiritual influence.

A RATIONAL religious faith at the present day has to face certain objections, implicit or direct, in the attitude of experts in psychology. The most significant are of three types.

1. *The Behaviourist School.* This is so "objective" that it rejects all introspection, and studies only behaviour, whether animal or human. Its method predisposes its exponents to scepticism concerning the objects of religious faith, for religion in the eyes of the Behaviourist is simply religious behaviour, *i.e.*, assuming devotional postures, singing hymns, practising various rituals. Behaviourism always seeks the reasons for human behaviour in motivating causes that urge human beings, so to speak, from behind. It admits no teleological principle that draws man forward from in front or from above.

While the Behaviourist method of inquiry into human action is very useful as a precaution against false assumptions, as it

seeks simple causes for complicated reactions, it can easily over-simplify a situation, and remain content with inadequate causes. Akin to its assumption that human behaviour can be traced back to natural and physical causative processes, without taking account of any spiritual or metaphysical causation, is the theory that all highly developed human responses, including the response to the appeal of mysterious and spiritual influences, can be explained in terms of the conditioned reflex, an automatic response effected through increasingly elaborate neural mechanisms.

2. *Mechanistic Determinism.* Some psychological schools are like the Behaviourist in adopting a mechanistic outlook reducing the human will to the level of the conditioned order. Human beings may feel free, but it is asserted that both introspection and experiment reveal an increasing number of causative factors, so that while conation remains an important mental activity, it owes nothing to the self-initiation of the actor. Every effort is the result of a previous stimulus, and actions that appear to be initiated by the subject are in reality the response to a number of given stimuli.

While this deterministic psychology would not limit its study to Behaviour, but considers also the reality of states of consciousness, among which are included the religious consciousness, all religious emotion with its appropriate responses is ascribed to material rather than to spiritual causation. Just as the states of fear, anger and affection can be seen as the result of sense stimuli, so the religious feelings of awe, enthusiasm and devotion would be set down to the working of precisely similar causes. According to the Freudian School, religious emotion and its expression are merely developed from the sex-instinct, which is responsible for so extensive a proportion of human feeling and action. Jung derives religious ideas from the fantasy-forming tendency which is typical of infantile life, and these ideas, he thinks, are inherited in the "racial mind".

From the religious point of view, the answer to both these psychological approaches is that while it is admitted that religious emotions and impulses are connected with normal human mental equipment and neural mechanism—all that is often loosely termed "instinctive"—this is no proof that all stimuli which can be received by the human organism must necessarily

be of the material order. In fact it would be strange if those ideas which have most powerfully influenced human progress towards higher ethics and conduct were nothing more than a derivation from the most primitive and base workings of the human mind. By examining more fully the third type of anti-religious argument, we may see the weaknesses of the materialist position.

3. *The Idea of Spiritual Reality as Projection.* Both the Behaviourist and the Psychoanalytic psychologies imply that the idea of God is a form of projection, whether they use this term or not. The Behaviourist cannot strictly speak of the mind projecting anything, because he admits no such thing as a true mind. All is mechanical force, however organized. Behaviourism interprets the more developed faculties in terms of the less developed. It is backward-looking. It admits no teleology. The idea of God in a man's vision is to be interpreted in terms of the more simple physical vision of the past. In the physical plane man has been known to see things that are not there. It is easy to understand how in the alleged spiritual plane he can see things that are not there. This is comprehensible behaviour.

Psychoanalysis speaks both of projection and regression. The father-image of God, familiar to Christianity, may be interpreted either as the projection of the desire for protection and love, or as an infantile regression and fixation by which the adult mind places itself in an abnormal and unjustified relation to a father who is no longer there. These theories have the attraction for scientific minds that they find the explanation of the unknown in the known, and eschew a multiplicity of causes. The simple idea of projection—a concept being thrown by the mind upon the screen of its mental environment like a lantern slide projected on a white sheet—is attractive to those sceptical of the reality of spiritual influences.

Albert Schweitzer (in "From my African Note-Book") tells how, when native Africans first saw slides of biblical characters thrown upon a screen, an old negro evangelist who had often had difficulty in persuading his hearers that the Bible stories were true, cried out, "Now you see with your own eyes, and who dares to say that it isn't all true?" At a lantern service in Holy Week, when Judas appeared on the screen, several

natives jumped up exclaiming, "Look out, he will betray you!" The projection was taken for living reality. Just so, it is argued, the history of religions is the story of the projection of the idea of God from the human mind upon its own background. Men have worshipped gods reflecting nothing more than their own desires for creativity, domination, and even lust. Later on they have projected a God who can forgive as well as command and love; a God who can think beyond the needs of a tribe, and direct the destinies of a world of nations; a God who will have mercy and not sacrifices; a God whom at length men call Father, and praise with joy. But at each stage the new lantern slide is carefully placed in the mind of man, to be projected upon the screen of his spiritual vision.

Here it may be noted that physical "projection" is of two types. There are projections which correspond to a reality, and projections which are fanciful. We might compare the projections of photographic film with the projections of Walt Disney's imaginative flights. It may be contended that every abstract concept in the human mind is a projection. All personalities, characters, institutions, are in a measure mental projections. Ask a man what he means by Joseph Stalin. If he is a Communist, he means the world's supreme statesman and hero. If he is a full-blooded Tory, he means a clever politician of whom civilized people must beware, perhaps a villain at heart. If he is the man-in-the-street in an England at war alongside Soviet Russia, he probably means a national leader to be highly respected for his organizing skill, whose friendship may well be cultivated by other civilized nations. Now, each of these ideas of Stalin is really a projection representing, or misrepresenting, one living man. In other words, what a man thinks of is his own projection of what he has to some extent imperfectly experienced. But Joseph Stalin himself is not the projection of any man's mind. None of our three examples has *imagined* Stalin, though each, for the purposes of his own thought and mental integrity, has imaged or projected an idea of him on to the background of his mental world.

On the other hand, there is a type of projection which is hallucination. There is the projection of the diseased or wrongly

functioning mind. A hallucination is a thing "seen" or "heard" which is not there at the time or in the place where it is seen or heard. Even so, it remains true that hallucinations are often of things that have, or have had, reality. If I have a hallucination that Stalin is sitting opposite me as I write, the projection is unreal, but all the same Stalin is a real being. So it may be perfectly valid to show that a considerable amount of alleged religious experience (*e.g.*, the examples in William James's "Varieties of Religious Experience") is of the hallucinatory order, proceeding from erratically functioning minds, but this cannot invalidate other religious experience which may have provided the very material on which the hallucinatory projection is based. Joan of Arc, and others, who have heard voices may have been deceived as to the reality of the voices they heard. If so, it would not prove that all voices heard by religious mystics or seers are deceptive, and purely mental projections.

The sceptic contends that God is the creation of the human brain. If so, then all our highest ideals are the creation of the human brain. This belief does not, happily, prevent the sceptic from recognizing the importance of ideals; but it does rob him of the conviction that behind these ideals there is a power greater than ourselves whose strength we may share by means of personal communion and spiritual contact. In the physical sphere the image on the slide comes before the projection. When the image on the slide, in what we call the spiritual sphere, is more majestic than anything the eyes have ever seen, we want to ask what is the source of it.

When Leuba insists that love of God is only a development of sexual love, Hocking replies that "Sex finds in worship its meaning and its law, not because the love of God is at bottom sexual, but because sexual love is potentially love of the divine". In other words, if God were not first in sex-love and working through it, no sex-love would lead as far as the concept of the divine love. It has been shown in history that deep religious trust makes heroic personalities, and this pragmatic test is still a forceful argument for the objective reality of things spiritual.

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS, PERSONALITY AND GOD

Traditional theology is, in the main, not only pre-evolutionary; it is pre-psychological. The advent of Psychology has involved Theology in a Copernican change more fundamental than that which challenged its Eden world-view a century ago. The psychologist applies to the universe of mind or spirit the same principles and method which the physical scientist has applied to the space-time universe. Upon examination, the spiritual universe, like the physical universe, discloses a structural form made up of categories or dimensions. As the physical universe consists of the dimensions of Time and Space, the latter comprising the three sub-dimensions of length, breadth and height, so the spiritual universe is constituted by the dimensions of Time, Meaning and Value, the last comprising the three sub-categories Truth, Beauty and Goodness.

Physical and mental, natural and supernatural are forced into a false antithesis when regarded, as in dogmatic theology, as disparate and antagonistic realms or orders of being. From the vantage ground of self-conscious value-judgment operating in the human mind, this apparent diversity is transcended, and the two universes, the physical and the spiritual, are seen to be one universe. Man is both body and mind, and each individual is the centre of a boundless spiritual universe. Only comparatively recently in his history has man become aware of this inner universe and of himself and his place in it as a centre of intellectual, aesthetic and moral awareness. Man becomes great or remains puny according as he identifies himself with the unfolding realities of this spiritual universe or remains perversely insensate to its eternal character. That which he, from his level of awareness and experience, rightly conceives as transcendent, is this unfathomable spiritual universe in which he has his being.

The most significant factor in the emergence of every new and higher form of existence in the story of evolution is that of unitary or holistic integration. With each evolutionary step in the physical universe the mental and spiritual attribute takes on a relatively more important rôle. The emergence of individual self-consciousness in man is only the promise of a new level of integration towards the attainment of which man experiences an urge (which he has

called divine), and of which he has ever more meaningful glimpses. Personality is the most satisfactory term in our vocabulary to describe this ideal and progressively real goal of every individual human life.

Personality involves the integration of instinctual needs and emotional drives in a co-ordinated hierarchy of sentiments, with each of which the conscious self can become sincerely and uncompromisingly identified as occasion arises. This involves the closing of the fissure which normally divides the rational, moral and time-oriented self-consciousness from the sub-conscious, instinctual and emotional self which carries the tabus and prohibitions of man's age-long group existence.

God is implicit and incarnate in the whole universe, but notably at a higher potential in humanity than in sub-conscious or pre-self-conscious levels of awareness. In the process of becoming an integrated personality, man is progressively becoming godlike.

THE impact of psychology upon theology is considerable. It has greatly modified man's attitude towards himself as a self-conscious being, towards his mental powers, his emotions and his motives, towards his evolution and history and towards his search after God and the eternal world.

It has never been the proper interest of theology to pronounce upon matters which fall within the field of the natural sciences. Her primary concern has been to give rational meaning to the emotionally moving experiences of wonder and awe in the face of an unfathomable and mysterious spiritual universe. The great myths found in historic religions were the early attempts of man to express truths of his emotional experience. Mythology was, therefore, implicit theology. As man became more self-conscious and increased his powers of abstract thought, explicit theology came into being as an attempt to rationalize and systematize the inner world of meaning and value. But this early rationalizing process proceeded on inadequate evidence, notably when the emotionally-felt ideas of mythology were carried over as literally true of the history, structure and nature of the physical world. What is seen as true primarily of man's inward experience is not necessarily true of the universe of physical phenomena. Moreover, with the growth of rational self-consciousness the myths ceased to cover the whole of

man's experience of life. What had been emotionally satisfying in myth and ritual at a group level of mental life ceased to satisfy the needs of a more fully individuated personality, and even proved inimical to its fullest realization.

Because the truths embodied in the myths had no obvious rational sanction, the theologian, requiring an unquestionable sanction, acclaimed them as the vehicles of supernatural revelation. Thus there occurred the subversion of theology, whereby, instead of intuition and reason exalting the enlightened individual conscience as the supreme authority in religion, it came about that the chief place was given to an arbitrary and mythical system belonging to the earlier group level of mental development. When faced with recalcitrant factors of human experience which could neither be conveniently ignored nor forced into his authoritarian scheme, the theologian appealed to the supernatural source and sanction of his dogmas. This claim to be the purveyor of a higher or divine set of truths immune from all possible criticism is quite indefensible, for it was the critical and speculative power of the human mind in its earlier attempt to understand and explain experience which gave rise, first to the myths, and then to systematic theology. To ignore or repudiate accredited historical evidence or the clear delivery of reason based on a greatly enlarged field of scientific evidence is, in effect, to repudiate the original purpose and function of theology and to leave it without its natural and historical basis. Once freed, however, from an obscurantist and dogmatic attitude, there is no reason why theology should not once more regain her one-time proud status as queen of the sciences.

Although man's mental powers have developed step by step with his time-sense and with his intuitions of value, he has hitherto failed largely to co-ordinate his primitive or childish emotional desires with his moral ideals. Until lately the emotional hinterland of human thought and behaviour has remained impervious to the understanding of all but a small minority of religious and artistic geniuses. Even they were able to emerge as mature personalities only by a tremendous effort of sincerity and inward wrestling against inhibitions and traditional social tabus. In so far as theology has presented a world-view dependent on primitive or early myths, it has

hindered man from applying to himself the same principles of rational understanding and control which he has long applied to his physical environment. It is only in the last few decades that psychology has come to grips with the problems which underlie the motivation of individual and social behaviour, and although it is the least complete of the sciences it finds traditional theology vulnerable at several important points. The impact of all the natural sciences together has already resulted in a new world-view; and when man's world-view changes, his own status in the world is changed also.

Modern astronomical science since Copernicus has forced man to give up the belief that this world is the physical centre of the universe. Biological science has made him concede his animal ancestry and see human nature as evolving rather than as a repetitive creation, of similarly and inevitably imperfect beings, generation after generation.

The historical and archaeological sciences are forcing man to concede his own relative childhood and to place his social, political and religious traditions in a wider context and a longer perspective.

Physical science is forcing him to acknowledge the relativity of all standards of measurement and judgment whether applied to the physical space-time universe or to the mental value-time universe, in which the self-conscious individual lives, moves and has his being.

Psychological science is forcing man to accept an even greater responsibility for his mental, moral and spiritual fulfilment (salvation) by showing that freedom depends on accepting the inexorable rule of law, and that supernatural intervention (*i.e.*, an arbitrary miracle-working power) is no more present in the mind than in the physical universe.

The effect of the evolutionary hypothesis and the theory of relativity upon a theology which is pre-evolutionary in its main contentions and absolutist in its claims, has yet to be fully realized. That is not to say that present-day scientific theories are to be taken in any sense as final, but there is sufficient evidence to show that if they are superseded it will be by a more complete synthesis of scientifically acquired knowledge and not by a return to supernaturally revealed sanctions. The physical scientist is concerned with the structural aspects of things as

they appear, and his mental world is bounded by the concepts of space and time. But his physical universe is a space-time continuum only when viewed objectively. When it is examined subjectively and its functional aspects are estimated, the same things and processes disclose other dimensions than space and time—namely, those of meaning and value.¹

Our physical bodies are part of the space-time universe and, as such, are subject to its laws. But we are not bodies which have minds: we are essentially minds which function in and through bodies. As thinking, feeling beings, we have, as it were, only one foot in the space-time universe. Both the self and the body exist in time. But, whereas the body has the additional spatial dimensions of length, breadth and height, the self has those of meaning and value in which to exist and grow. Awareness of himself and of a realm of values is the significant and inalienable characteristic of man as a self-conscious being. This may seem too obvious to mention, but it is completely ignored in all materialistic and mechanistic philosophies and once acknowledged invalidates any theories built upon them.

It has been usual to sub-divide the general dimension of value into the three categories of truth, beauty and goodness. These, with the dimension of time, constitute the multi-dimensional sphere of reality in which the self has its being. This is none other than the spiritual realm or sphere which has often been mistakenly appropriated to a dogmatic or credal outlook. A second and more general mistake has been made by theologians and philosophers who, in treating of the spiritual world, forgot or ignored the time-category involved in all spiritual apprehension and life. A third and most serious mistake was the building up of a dualistic philosophy whereby earth was sundered from heaven, the body from the spirit and Man from God. We shall consider this third mistake first.

The self and the body are not two distinct and separate entities; they are only conceived as such. Every human being is both mind and body. The fundamental reality is the mind, but all mental activity is manifest in and through its appropriate structural form.

¹ Although the dimensions of categories of meaning and value are, strictly speaking, outside the sphere of scientific research, they are at least implicit in every judgment which the scientist makes.

The body is the normal structural form which mind has created for itself under the conditions of time. The mind is the functioning or functional aspect of the form or body it animates. The highest function of the normal human body, with its highly developed brain and nervous system, is thought or consciousness. Body and mind are therefore inseparable components of every human being. Viewed objectively, all phenomena are physical structures; viewed subjectively, the same phenomena have functional significance according to their natures and the purposes or motives which they express.

It is important for its bearing upon traditional theology that the interdependence of mind and matter should be stressed. Of reality outside of a time-existence we can know nothing, for the act of knowing is itself time-conditioned, and cannot therefore be properly employed to explain that which, by definition, lies beyond or outside of time. The theologian in his treatment of a supernatural and eternal world has hitherto largely failed to recognize this inherent contradiction. The very concepts which theologians have used to give meaning to their apprehension of eternity are *ipso facto* invalid. The ideas of permanence, changelessness and indestructibility all imply existence, which means nothing if it is not existence in time. Even the raising of the abstract concepts of truth, beauty and goodness to their ideal apotheoses necessarily involves the assumption that these supreme values in some sense exist. If they do not exist, then the attempt to conceive of them as if they existed is both meaningless and futile. If, however, they do exist, then the time factor is involved and the temporal sphere has not been transcended. To soar into the realm of abstract thought is not to pass from time into eternity, but only to pass beyond the spatial limitations of the space-time continuum. The temporal category can never be transcended in human experience, however spiritually exalted it may be.

This does not mean, therefore, that the soul cannot exist apart from its present physical body, but it does mean that any type of future life which we can conceive is a life in time and not in eternity. The theologian, and every man when he indulges in theological speculation, must recognize that the human mind is, by its nature, completely baffled in the attempt to define what it means by Eternity, and God apprehended as

"The Eternal". That is why the deepest and most penetrating insights of the mystics have always been thrown back on the negative assertions that God, as transcendent, is unknowable and completely inscrutable. It is only as immanent that God can be known. In so far as God dwells outside of space and time he cannot be known. Only in so far as He is present in His works and takes upon Himself the bonds of creation does He become known to us. Again, it is through the human mind finding significance, meaning and purpose in life and the Universe that the reality of God is apprehended.

The Universe, including man, is, at the same time, both material and spiritual, and, as we have shown, is one or the other as it is regarded objectively or subjectively. The space-time aspect of the Universe appears to our senses and our reason to spread out to infinity in all directions. In similar manner the spiritual or value-time universe spreads out from the self of individual consciousness into an infinity of being. The surpassing wonder of this spiritual outlook, which the human mind can but dimly apprehend without ever comprehending, compels man to worship and to name that which so completely transcends the uttermost longings of his finite spirit. It is this fathomless inner world of value which constitutes the realm of religious experience and which ensures that the truth and reality of God shall be apprehended subjectively. When we speak of God as transcendent we are really referring to the limitless realm of values apprehended in the spiritual Universe, but never yet completely incarnated or realized by man in society. But these values exist for the individual mind only in so far as they have meaning for him and relevance to his own need and condition. They become completely real for him only in so far as the human mind passes from the intellectual and objective contemplation of them to a subjective identification with them. Such identification of the self with that which was previously beyond self constitutes spiritual growth. If it is appropriated permanently, then it also constitutes a development of personality. Now, because all spiritual experience is the experience of a person, it is inevitably felt as a personal experience; and because each step is felt as a further increment towards the realization of the fullness of complete personality, it is natural that that which still transcends

the level of present achievement should be apprehended and even conceived of as personal. This should not lead us to think of God as a supreme person, although it was natural for early man to do so, and even to picture God as a super-man.

Nor do we wish to limit the idea of God to the concept of personality. Whether we regard man as a person and God as supra-personal, or God as the fullness of personality and man as incomplete and therefore infra-personal, may seem at first to be only a matter of agreement over a definition. But if we are to use personality for the fullest possible integration of the individual self and use the term with any precision at all, it is advisable to keep it for a level of human integration which we can portray in significant lineament. To apply personality to God, especially God as transcendent, would be to remove it immediately from any possibility of exact definition. Nevertheless it is true to say that the ideal or perfect integration of any personality transcends all present realization, for to have realized it would be to have already achieved it.

The human mind cannot approach the physical universe without seeking for significance and implicit worth in its phenomena. The evolutionary process, which appears at first to be so diverse and conflicting, yields in the end a spiritual interpretation which enables man to see himself both physically and spiritually as the latest and highest expression (in time) of what he calls a purpose. The evolutionary process which, when all its aspects are taken together, discloses the meaning of life most fully, has to be examined on its structural side with careful attention. It now appears that development has *not* been of one type of phenomenon with all its latest and highest qualities evident in miniature from the outset. Evolution has come about in a series of steps or jumps, the latest of which has registered new levels of integrated (or organic) wholeness; and with each newly-emergent whole, new powers, attributes and qualities have become manifest. Moreover the integrated structures of lower levels are not supplanted or disintegrated on the appearance of the higher unit, but while continuing to obey their own laws and fulfil their own natures, show new abilities to serve the interest and life of the community of similar units to which they belong. These new abilities are characters of the newly-emerged unity as a whole and not of the units in

their previous separate existence, for they cease to exist if the unity is broken up.¹

Man is seeking a new wholeness: the wholeness of an integrated personality. When, in the fullness of time, the inordinately complex cellular structure of the human brain and nervous system reached a new level of integration, self-consciousness and the whole spiritual universe opened up to man's inward eye. It must have been with wonder, not unmixed with terror, that "the first that ever burst into that silent sea" recoiled at the sense of its unfathomable immensity. For long after individuated self-consciousness began to appear man would naturally turn back from his mental solitariness and isolation to the relatively unself-conscious *group* life, where, in religious ritual and dance, he could recapture emotional unity with his kind. Even now, the lower mental and moral levels of social custom and tabu, fortified by emotional religious rituals and traditional attitudes, still keep a great part of mankind chained to a spiritual childhood and largely ignorant of the fuller spiritual maturity which is man's natural and proper goal.

But mental life has a long pre-human history. Intelligence is present to a considerable degree in the higher animals, and many degrees of awareness are required to account for the adaptability of instinctive forms of behaviour. Below that again there are levels of feeling-awareness evident in all sentient beings, and who shall say that the sensitivity of the flower, which turns with the sun, is not an early form in nature of that which in man is raised to the level of moral responsibility and spiritual aspiration?

Even the affinities of one chemical element for another and the meticulous fulfilment of the functions of rejection and selection prevent us from putting down a barrier at any point in the whole gamut of creation beyond which we can categori-

¹ In the picture-language of the scientists the basic unit which operates as a whole in the physical world is the atom. The variation in the number of electrons in an atom gives the whole range of chemical substances with their variously definable properties and powers. These chemical units combine to make up molecules, and these in turn combine in different groupings to make up chemical compounds. A complex of molecules combines to make up the cell, and the many diverse combinations of cells make up the multi-cellular organisms, which in their turn go to make up the vegetable and animal kingdoms.

cally deny the presence of that factor or aspect which we, at our self-conscious level, know as mind.

This is not to minimize the great qualitative differences which belong to each succeeding level of integration. Indeed, the clear understanding of these differences gives meaning and direction to the evolutionary process, and the otherwise meaningless idea of a moral purpose. Moreover, it justifies a prophetic anticipation of the next step in man's evolution, pointing towards integration of the sub-conscious and self-conscious levels of the human mind through self-conscious co-ordination of the emotional and sub-conscious levels with the rational and intuitively conceived patterns of value. Only by this process of integration can the fissure between the conscious and sub-conscious be closed, and the dispassionate tranquillity of a real maturity be achieved. This is what we mean by personality; it is towards the achievement of personality that each individual life is thrusting its way up from sub-conscious levels, creating rational self-consciousness, which at first appears to be the antithesis of the emotionally conditioned sub-conscious, but by which the self becomes unified in one organic whole.

Self-consciousness and moral responsibility dawned on the human horizon together. The story of a Garden of Eden from the evolutionary point of view is not the record of the fall of man but of his entry into a higher moral and spiritual awareness. "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked," emphasizes the emergence of a new self-consciousness;—"and the Lord God said, 'Behold, man is become as one of us, to know good and evil,'" announces the concomitant emergence of moral responsibility.

The onward and upward thrust of creative mind towards personality is the truer meaning of the so-called fall of man from primal innocence. An Eden-life is a joyous state in retrospect, and natural to the child, but only a neurotic adult having failed to achieve a new level of integration will seek a permanent solution of life's difficulties in the mental and emotional atmosphere of childhood. Certain periodic and temporary relaxations are, however, not only permissible, but essential to life. Games and recreation have their valuable part to play in renewing man's vitality for whatever is the next step on his upward path. The full meaning of life's struggle

lies ahead in a fulfilment of man's basic needs at a higher level of unitary control and self-sufficiency. At each succeeding level this is experienced as the will to live well and to live better, which stands in marked contrast to the regressive desire for security and for release from personal struggle in passive reliance upon customs and tabus, and satisfaction with past achievements. The forward and progressive life-urge seeks to transcend past levels of knowledge which are now seen to be but relative ignorance—of those traditions and habits which are now seen to be fear-motivated prejudices—of social privileges which are now seen to be entrenched injustices, and of self-interest, which is seen to be frustrating man's higher selfhood. It is at once a chastening and hopeful thought that man's intellectual powers, his self-consciousness and his sense of personal moral responsibility, when seen against an age-long un-self-conscious group life, are but the achievements of yesterday. It is only at a comparatively late date in the history of *Homo sapiens* that evidence appears of an individual and self-critical conscience.

The stimulation and direction of this progressive urge, which is naturally resurgent in the youth of every generation, are the chief and proper concern of religious institutions. But traditional and institutional religion, with its group-emotionalism and mythological social heritage, often stimulates a regressive desire to escape the trials and difficulties inherent in the attainment of maturity, responsibility and integrated personality.

Social solidarity and mass enthusiasms, even in religion, are not valid substitutes for the individual attainment of personality. There is a marked tendency in the modern world to look to a new form of social cohesion as the next integrative level of mind. But wherever the social group as chosen race or nation state has been acclaimed as having complete authority over the life, thought and conscience of the individual, the stream of social progress itself has been fouled at the source. Even the Communistic ideal of a classless society—ethically superior to other contemporary totalitarian philosophies—requires for its realization the appearance of a far greater number of unselfish, responsible and spiritually integrated personalities. The Beloved Community of Christian aspiration rises no higher than the individuals who compose it; indeed, it cannot rise to the

height of its most mature personalities, for a community has no neural sensitivity comparable with that of the human individual. And it would seem fruitless to hope to integrate separate human beings into a super-being as cells are integrated into a living organism. In the history of evolution society has already provided the rough material for the next step in emergent evolution in the not yet fully integrated being of the self-conscious man, for it was out of society, and in contra-distinction to its uncritical group-consciousness, that man became an individual. Moreover, evolution never reverses its direction or retraces its steps. It is only by transforming and sublimating, by re-valuing his emotions in the form of sentiments and enfranchising himself from the lower levels of social morality, that man can fulfil his destiny and attain to integrated personality and to what may lie beyond in the higher realm of a complete union with the over-Soul.

Let it be granted that social cohesion is necessary to the life of the individual as cellular cohesion is necessary to the life of sentient organisms. But it is the sentience of the organism at its higher level and the spiritual sensitivity of the human being at the next level which constitute the growing-point of mind and value towards the attainment of personality. Society has of itself neither sentience nor personality, and no sign or promise of anything approaching either. The individual man, however far below the level of ideal attainment he may be, has the makings of something greater than the cells of which he is physically made up, and of something infinitely superior to the social group of which he is a member.

We may conclude by summarizing the main thesis. The most significant factor in the emergence of every new and higher form of existence in the story of evolution is that of unitary or holistic integration. With each evolutionary step in the physical universe the mental and spiritual attribute takes on a relatively more important rôle. The emergence of individual self-consciousness in man is only the promise of a new level of integration towards the attainment of which man experiences an urge which he has called divine, and of which he has ever more meaningful glimpses. Personality is the most satisfactory term in our vocabulary to describe this ideal and progressively real goal of every individual human life.

Personality involves the integration of instinctual needs and emotional drives in a co-ordinated hierarchy of sentiments, with each of which the conscious self can become sincerely and uncompromisingly identified as occasion arises. This involves the closing of the fissure which normally divides the rational, moral and time-oriented self-consciousness from the the sub-conscious, instinctual and emotional self which carries the tabus and prohibitions of man's age-long group existence.

Finally, personality involves the achievement of freedom—the glorious freedom of the sons of God—because it involves the recognition of full responsibility in matters of intellectual judgment, moral decision and autonomous purposive action. A greater and more meaningful affirmation is now possible than the orthodox assertion that at a certain moment in time God incarnated Himself and became man. That affirmation is not only that God is immanent throughout creation and incarnates Himself in every human soul, but that man is progressively discarnating himself and becoming godlike.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The problem of evil arises because we believe that God is good and has the power to make the world good. We cannot accept a view that so emphasizes God's transcendence as to make His activity arbitrary, for this would be to deny His goodness. The view that God's power rather than His goodness is limited is less objectionable, but raises serious difficulties for worship. We need not abandon omnipotence, or have recourse to the notion of self-limitation, if it is recognized that omnipotence does not imply the power to do what is self-contradictory.

We refuse to adopt the solution of dismissing evil as illusory, even though it be true that the overcoming of evil may lead to a preponderance of good. Our task is to eliminate evil, and in spite of setbacks there is on the whole progress in the struggle. It is on these lines that we come nearest to finding a solution.

THERE is no problem of theology more serious, more widely felt or more persistent than the problem of evil. The question at once suggests itself, Why are we so obsessed with the difficulty of explaining the existence of evil in the world, whereas the existence of good does not present any comparable problem?

It is certainly true that most people expect to find the world good and not evil. The expectation reveals itself in the sentiment which we sometimes hear expressed that the world ought to be better than it is. This is, no doubt, a loose expression, for there can only be an obligation to do something, not to be something, and there cannot be an obligation on "the world" even to do anything. Nevertheless those who use the phrase are using it in a genuinely moral sense, and they are conscious of an obligation lying somewhere; they do not merely mean "the world ought to be better if it were to be a pleasant place to inhabit". What they really mean is "God ought to have made or kept the world better than it is".

Now, as soon as the obligation is formulated in this way, we see that it implies two assumptions about God. First, He is good; and secondly, He has the power to make the world good. If either of these assumptions were false, the problem

would cease to exist, at any rate in its present form. It will, in fact, be seen that many of the solutions that have been propounded, and of the reflections in which religious men have found relief from the problem, do imply a challenge to one of these two fundamental assumptions.

It is not to be supposed that any of the higher religions, at any rate, has ever encouraged its adherents to declare openly that God is not good. This is, however, what is implied in any view that so emphasizes the transcendence of God as to make His activity appear, from a human point of view, to be arbitrary. To say that goodness in God is so different from human goodness that our standards of judgment are invalid where God is concerned, is to say that God is not what we mean by good. This doctrine is by no means uncommon in the higher religions. It is, indeed, the characteristic position of Islam, which lays all the emphasis on the power and transcendence of Allah, and regards it as impious to expect him to act in accordance with our ideas of justice and goodness. A similar position has also been taken up by many Christian thinkers. It is characteristic of the later Nominalists, one of whom, Pierre d'Ailly, even goes so far as to say that nothing is good or bad in itself, and that no human action is a sin for any other reason than that it has been forbidden by God (P. d'Ailly: *Quaest. in Sent. I. Q. 9a; 2R*). Similar statements are, of course, characteristic of Calvin and his followers down to the present day; there is nothing to choose, as regards arbitrariness, between his pronouncement "Whatsoever He willeth, even for this that He willeth it, ought to be taken for righteousness" (*Institutes: III. xxiii. 2*) and Brunner's "The Good consists in alway doing what God wills at any particular moment. . . . So far as we are concerned, the will of God is absolutely free" ("The Divine Imperative." P. 82).

The application of such a view to the problem of evil is obvious. If only God is good, and we cannot judge, then what seems to us evil may not be evil at all. But this is a misuse of language, for the words "good" and "evil" do have a quite specific meaning, and if God's nature is contrary to what we call good, then we ought not to allow piety to prevent us from calling it evil. The Muslim position, that God creates good and evil and that we have no right to demand

that He shall be good, is far more honest and logical than that of the Nominalists and Calvinists; and it is in fact the case that Muslims are not obsessed with the problem of evil as most Christians are.

The difficulty is enhanced by the fact that there is an element of truth in this recognition of God as transcendent. Even those who shrink from the second Isaiah's suggestion (C. 45: v. 7; it is not here a dogma, as it becomes in Islam) that God creates evil, will recognize some truth in the famous passage, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The point is, surely, that God's ways are here described, not merely as different from ours, but as higher; and it is implied that we have some power of recognizing them as higher. This at any rate avoids making God's ways merely arbitrary.

Our insistence on this principle that God's activity is not arbitrary and that He is good in a sense at least akin to that in which we speak of human goodness has been well expressed by Professor J. Laird: "If finite creatures, through the imperfections of their imaginations, are unable to see God's purposes as God Himself does, they must at least believe that goodness in its fundamental character is the same in God as it is for us, and that God's very being is the pure essence of this sovereignty of the best". The classic statement of this point of view is in John Stuart Mill's "Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy" (4th ed. Pp. 128-129): "To say that God's goodness may be different in kind from man's goodness, what is it but saying, with a slight change of phraseology, that God may possibly not be good? . . . I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go." In spite of a certain ring of Titanism, these words are essentially true, and embody a protest that still needs to be heard.

Accordingly we are quite unable to accept any solution of the problem that even by implication casts doubts upon the goodness of God. On the contrary, we believe that goodness is found in its purest form in God alone, and that men are

called upon to love and pursue this goodness for its own sake and to grow towards God by becoming better.

Are we, then, to take refuge in a denial of the other postulate, that God has the power to make the world better than it is? At first sight this solution is not without attractiveness. Omnipotence is not the divine attribute which appeals most to religious people to-day, except perhaps in Islam. Indeed, we might go so far as to say that the obvious solution to the problem lies in postulating a complete and ultimate dualism. Yet it remains true that men have always found it difficult to rest in this position. In Jewish and Christian thought Satan is a creature who has become evil only after a fall from goodness and who will in the end be trodden underfoot, and even Zoroastrianism tends to think of the good God as ultimately victorious. It would, indeed, be difficult to worship a God who was thought of as constantly held in check by an equally strong evil power.

Nevertheless, the possibility of solving the problem on these lines may suggest the necessity of examining carefully the meaning of omnipotence before it is ascribed to God. It cannot reasonably be held to mean the power to do absolutely anything, however contradictory or foolish or wrong. It evidently means only the power to act in such ways as are expressions of God's nature. In ascribing any attribute to God, we are, of course, denying the applicability of its logical contradictory, and in postulating God's goodness, we exclude the power to will evil. To speak of this as a self-limitation on the part of God, is somewhat misleading; it suggests a deliberate activity which is quite inappropriate, and by using the term "limitation" it still suggests that God would be greater and more worshipful if this self-limitation were not necessary to His purposes.

It is, then, better to avoid such language, and to continue to speak of God's power as unlimited. If omnipotence is to have any real meaning, it can only be the power to act fully and freely in accordance with the agent's nature, and this power God does have and exercise. Similarly in granting men free will God is not limiting His own power by delegating a part of it to imperfect agents; He is, we may believe, adopting the best means to the raising of men to His own plane of goodness. No doubt human freedom is responsible for a great deal of the evil

we see, but we are certainly not in a position to say that the world would have been on the whole a better place if men had been created sinless automata. Thomas Huxley, indeed, thought it would: "I protest that if some great Power would agree to make me always to think what is true and do what is right, on condition of being turned into a sort of clock . . . I should instantly close with the offer" ("Method and Results" in "Collected Essays". Vol. I. P. 192). Most of us would probably take a different view.

This is not to say, however, that we are here on the track of a solution of the whole problem. It may be questioned whether freedom demands the existence of evil, so that it could not be exercised in a world in which evil did not exist. Even before the emergence of man, though there may not have been moral evil, there was conflict, the preying of life upon life. What is the source of this conflict? Every species (says Bergson) behaves as if the general movement of life stopped at it instead of passing through it. It thinks only of itself; it lives only for itself. Hence come the numberless struggles which we behold in Nature. Such reflections have led some modern thinkers to postulate a precosmic Fall, in place of the traditional idea of the Fall of Adam, though it would hardly be claimed that this could provide a complete solution of the speculative problem.

Some of the reflections in the last two paragraphs do, however, suggest what may be classified as the third main line of attack upon the problem. This does not question either the goodness or the omnipotence of God: it simply alleges that the existence of evil is only apparent, not real. If evil is necessary in order that good may exist, and a universe that includes both good and evil is better than one that contains neither, then there is a sense in which Pope was right in saying "All partial evil universal good". ("Essay on Man". Ep. I. L. 291.) Even biology suggests that where the conditions are too easy, species tend to degenerate; and this may well be true of man in the moral sphere. It is through resistance, opposition and conflict that life develops its powers, the spirit of man reveals its true potencies. Again, the view that evil is essentially negative and is only the absence of good, which is positive, is one that has appealed to many philosophers, and especially to

the Stoics and to Augustine. The good coheres, evil does not; and it is only where there are some elements of good mixed up with evil (*e.g.*, honour among thieves) that it becomes formidable. If Milton's Satan is a really dangerous figure, that is because he is by no means wholly evil: in Catholic thought, just because he generally has no redeeming features, he tends to be mischievous rather than terrifying. The very ancient notion that wrong-doing is the outcome of ignorance and blindness is another form of this view. Paul (or one of his disciples) speaks of those who are alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them (Ephesians. C. 1: v. 18), and one expression of the "Light mysticism" of the Johannine writings is found in such statements as "He that hateth his brother is in darkness. . . . The darkness hath blinded his eyes". (I John. C. 2: vv. 9-11.) There is an affinity between such passages and the well-known Socratic view of virtue as knowledge on the one hand and the Indian conception of *avidya* (illusion) on the other. To turn to a modern writer, we find H. G. Wells writing, "It seems to me that the whole living creation may be regarded as walking in its sleep, walking in the sleep of instinct and individualized illusion." ("First and Last Things." 1st Ed. P. 79.)

The resemblance between this passage and that quoted from Bergson above shows that it is not only the manifestation of evil in self-conscious beings to which this view is applicable. Wherever evil exists, it is suggested, whether in the predatory tendencies of the animal species, or in the sin and selfishness and discord of human life, it arises from the illusion of separateness, whereby living things are blind to the wider life, the larger unity to which they belong. From this point of view, it is clear, the basic fact is not any mere lack of intellectual knowledge: it is the lack of that vision of truth which finds its fullest realization in the sense of union with God. "By frailty and overcoming," says Juliana of Norwich, "man falleth into sin. And the cause is blindness: for he seeth not God."

And yet, suggestive as these reflections are, they are far from giving us a complete solution of the problem of Evil. To say that the problem is solved, or rather that there is no problem because evil is unreal, is altogether too glib. Evil certainly exists, and to us it is only too real; and it would be

cruel and shallow to tell men that they need not worry about it because in the eyes of God and philosophers it is only a negation.

We seem, then, to be driven to the conclusion that the problem of Evil stands out as one of unique difficulty, to which there is no complete speculative solution. There are, indeed, many reflections and theories which do something to mitigate it, in varying degree for different people, but none of them would command agreement as a complete, or even as the most helpful consideration. For us men, indeed, the solution seems to be along the line, not of denying evil, but destroying it. In doing that we may indeed be helping to solve the theoretical problem. It appears to be of the essence of evil that we must strive against it and seek to conquer it. To see evil as a thing to be overcome, a thing in the overcoming of which the higher powers of the human spirit are actualized, is to see also that in the scheme of things it may have a necessary part to play. To some extent we are enabled to win the victory; but we must not be led, as some are, to question the reality of progress. There are, indeed, periods of retrogression, and it would be idle to deny that at the present time there is a widespread lowering of standards in certain respects, notably international morality and regard for truth. Such setbacks can even, like most forms of evil, be turned to profit, if we learn from them the important lesson that it is a condition of progress that man shall realize his responsibility and deal adequately with the situation that confronts him. Taking a broad view, there has been in history a continuing rise in moral standards and an increasing diffusion of the higher standards. We are shocked by many things that our fathers would have taken for granted, and we are far less ready to acquiesce in the discovery that "what is right on this side of the Pyrenees is wrong on that".

It seems, then, that so far as we are concerned the solution must be sought along practical rather than speculative lines, though of course no hard-and-fast separation is possible, and we can conquer evil only if we have some understanding of its nature. At any rate the undoubted fact that there has been progress in spite of periodical setbacks encourages us to believe that this solution does exist.

desires found in the contrast. Suffering in an animal is not suffering to another "onlooker" animal, because it cannot feel and reflect upon the pain of another. Neither is suffering in an animal a problem for the sufferer; the animal cannot reflect upon it. The problem only arises when there is reflection, and when reflection takes place upon the level of felt beliefs and obligations.

This aspect can be stated in another way. The farm labourer rabbiting by the side of a hedge takes pleasure in what he is doing. A rabbit is driven out of a hole, presumably through fright. A dog leaps upon the rabbit, holds it by its teeth, and takes the wriggling animal in its mouth to the farm labourer. The labourer casually takes the rabbit, wrings its neck and throws it to one side, while hallooing the dog on to another "kill". All that, presumably, involves a great deal of suffering for the rabbit, but the farm labourer is unaware of it; it does not present a problem—in fact he is thoroughly enjoying himself.

On a certain level there is no suffering in that sequence of events because no one is aware of it, not even the rabbit as a sufferer. The best description of the occurrence is perhaps "life". The man, the dog, the rabbit are in contact with the earth from which the life comes. The sequence of events just described does not make the slightest impression upon "life". Rabbits will be born again, so will farm labourers, and so will dogs. In imagination the same scene can be enacted again fifty years hence; the fact of "life" will still persist, and the action by the hedgerow will not have had the slightest effect upon the fact.

Suffering as a problem only really comes into being through the reflective onlooker; if he is disposed to feel within himself something of what the rabbit must have endured, then suffering as a problem comes into existence. That particular incident will have to be fitted into a whole general philosophy of life. "Nature red in tooth and claw" probably becomes a mighty fact for him; but Nature is not red in tooth and claw until he or someone else sees it as such. Nature, apart from man's reflections, is entirely neutral; it only becomes ethically alive, and only possesses degrees of value, in the reflections of man. Any value apart from this is read into it through some

preconception of the nature of reality; such a preconception, of course, is entirely dependent on reflection.

The nature of the problem of suffering, therefore, is dependent on the reflection of man, or, to use another term, on the spirit of man. There is no suffering apart from spirit—that is, suffering understood as a problem.

This fact may be supported by a truth inherent in the very statement of it. If there is a difference of value between the lack of sensitiveness in the farm labourer and the existence of sensitiveness in the onlooker, that difference can only be explained in terms of spirit. The whole matter in this particular comparison would have to be enlarged, qualified and explained from many degrees and depths of personality; but if it be granted that there is a difference in quality of feeling, then that difference would lie in spirit. The nature of suffering is only perceived through the spiritual life.

The first statement of principle may therefore be laid down: suffering as a problem only comes into existence in spiritually reflective beings. If a man is aware of the problem, then it is only because in the microcosm of his personality he becomes aware of something that demands explanation. In him life reaches a conscious expression which is entirely different from the non-conscious level perceived in the illustration given. Of course the matter could not just be left there. Man could hardly become spiritually aware out of a past that is null and void. Spirit—if the theory of evolution and development is accepted—must have been potentially present from the first, and if potentially present, then possessing within itself the power to make itself known. This does away with all notion of Nature being absolutely neutral. But a discussion of this would wander away from our purpose; sufficient for it to be said that all suffering is involved in spirit, and there is no suffering without spirit.

THE NATURE OF SUFFERING

But this statement of principle cannot stand by itself. Inherently involved in the spirit is the "ought", and the creative nature of all spirit. Man, when aware of suffering, places that awareness against a background of a belief about existence.

Suffering, he declares, ought not to be, and the affirmation of that "ought" declares a great deal, in belief, about the universe. The universe, he declares in fact, is of such a nature that suffering within it is a problem. A universe of that nature, in which the problem arises, is essential to the fact of suffering. Suffering of itself declares that the universe must be a place in which its fact is a problem, because the very awareness of the fact creates the problem. Not only is there no suffering without spirit, but there is no suffering unless the universe is of such a character that suffering becomes a problem within it. There is one alternative to this. Suffering can be accepted—that is to say, it can be reflected upon in such a manner that the ought is overcome by the acceptance; the problem is overcome by the fact being absorbed by the spirit in a certain manner. But that kind of reflection, and that act, implies creation; it implies a certain kind of effort by the spirit upon the problem, and that in turn implies the kind of universe in which that effort is necessary. There is no escape; either a universe in which there is an "ought", or a universe in which the "ought" can be overcome by creative action. Such a universe implies a spirit beyond man; he is consciously aware that his spirit is in conflict with, or seeks harmony with, a spirit in the universe. It may be stated, therefore, that the very fact of suffering not only presupposes spirit in man, but spirit in the universe, and the whole problem arises, as such, in the relation between those two facts of spirit. Unless there were a spiritual man and a spiritual universe there would be no suffering. A certain kind of universe is involved in the fact of suffering, as well as a certain kind of man. The problem, consequently, assumes a religious aspect and it can be stated in religious language: "Why a suffering world and a good God?" And it should be noted that all this is implied in the very fact of suffering in itself. It is not imposed from the outside as a "religious" speculation or problem. It is inherent in the fact—so inherent that the question is forced upon us from the inside rather than imposed by a definite belief about the universe. This is important, because it places the fact of suffering at the very heart of the nature of religion. It is so important, indeed, that some defence must be offered for it.

MAN IS THE LONELY "ALL"

Without a comprehending spirit beyond the spirit of man, man is left lonely in his universe. This may not be a problem for the activist engaged in the thrilling and fulfilling task of changing and creating history; but it is a problem for the onlooker who must reflect upon suffering. (It is, of course, a problem in the long run for the activist, for he cannot cut himself off, no matter how absorbed he may be in his task, from the abiding problem. To the extent that he insulates himself from the problem, to that extent he ignores important aspects of truth, and to that extent his work in history is either incomplete or doomed to futility.) If man is reduced to loneliness in the universe, then he is the All; everything of worth begins and ends with him, and he must do what he can with his own fact of suffering. He cannot act like a wounded animal and retire to a corner to lick his wounds, or wait, unconscious save in instinct, for the end. He, because he is what he is, must reflect, and reflection, without a spirit in the beyond—or to use the true word, without God—must impress him with his isolation. He becomes the lonely Figure in the world, the solitary Self, without reason for existence—in the realm of suffering—apart from the fact that he is alive. It may be proclaimed that this is the true destiny of man. Some will say that this loneliness is the truth and should be accepted as such. The heroic man will accept it (so it is declared), not "disdaining to worship at the shrine that his own hands have built: undismayed by the empire of chance . . . proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate for a moment his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the march of unconscious power." (Bertrand Russell: "A Free Man's Worship", P. 57.) Only a coward, it could be proclaimed, would attempt to run away from this conclusion, and it is cowardice, or weakness, which seeks for a life beyond its own through which the problem of suffering is solved.

But "a weary yet unyielding Atlas", or a Prometheus who suffers "woes which Hope thinks infinite", is no true representation of the whole of a man caught in the fact of suffering. This assertion of the heroic in the darkness may be a flash

of triumph for a moment, but only for a moment. It is a defiance, perhaps, that many a spirit will be called upon to bear, and the defiance will never be out of place in the total attempt at solution; but if it were believed that such darkness would persist for ever, in all the grim and final meaning of that word, then many a man, not out of cowardice or weakness, would simply "hand the Universe back its ticket" (or whatever symbol of fact, life and meaning that the author of "A Free Man's Worship" would choose to put in the place of the universe). Indeed, it is the case that such heroism, when symbolized in myth, is always understood against the promise of something better, something that might be. There are other myths, proclaiming other truths, and it is always possible that those other truths may after all be more ultimate than the one proclaimed in the darkly heroic myth. The philosopher and the poet may live the experience intensely at the moment of creation; this, he may proclaim, is the inescapable fact of suffering; but he does not always remain at the moment of creation; he goes on living, and through many a "creek and crannie" steals in a trickle of hope—no matter how much the philosopher or the poet may try to keep it out. And hope in this sense means the destruction of the man as the Lonely All, the destruction of his isolation in an unmeaning universe. The heroism, which belongs to the moment, and may indeed belong to a lifetime, would not perhaps be so final in affirmation if hope indeed were finally eliminated.

If this particular experience of heroism were lived upon the actual level of known pain and mental darkness, and these latter conditions were faced without a glimmer of light, if actual tragedy were conceived as massed horror and gloom from which there is no escape, then this experience (apart from pathology) could not be known without the awareness of other happier states of existence in others. And it would still be the duty of the suffering philosopher and poet to introduce into his final conclusion of truth the experiences of others.

Suffering without God leads to total pessimism, and total pessimism is untrue, not only because it ignores so many facts of existence, but because it denies the existence of the universe itself. It may be a logical act of the pessimist to "hand the Universe back its ticket", but the Universe is still there, still

awaits explanation, and a denial of it is either an act of an incomplete man or a desertion of truth in the name of truth. The so-called heroism, indeed, can so easily lead to cowardice.

This pessimism, when viewed from the point of view of suffering, is the conclusion of all materialist philosophies. They may seek to be explanations of reality, but when brought up against the reality of spirit, as seen in man, they offer no explanation. Suffering, again, in a sense lies at the heart of religion, because it is so inevitably involved with spirit.

The problem is thus left as a problem between God and man, and without this contrast there is hardly a problem; suffering exists within a void. Reflection consequently leads on to an attempted understanding of the existence of a good God and the existence of something which presumably a good God would not allow to exist.

SUFFERING IN THE SELF

It is almost a distortion of the problem to attempt to reflect upon the matter without taking into the whole experience the nature of religious experience. Thus, it must be assumed that there is a traffic between Man and his Maker which, from its very existence, must throw a profound illumination upon something so intimately involved in the relationship; but nevertheless it is possible, at least in part, to find a solution without reference to the religious experience.

It is a fact that suffering in the self is not so acute a problem as suffering perceived in others. This is not a statement of altruism, but a statement of inclusive experience. In the self there is always a part, or a potential part, that is master of the situation. It can fight, even without hope; but the fact that it can fight gives an assurance of mastery and conclusion that cannot be attained when suffering in others is perceived.

One of the most critical forms of this latter kind is when it is perceived in innocence. Innocence, it is assumed, in a good universe should not suffer; it is the clear sheet upon which apparently only the hand of God can write, and yet that hand only too clearly writes in a character which is difficult for mortal man to read. The young child, tossing restlessly in pain, with no conclusion to the pain, perhaps, except the end,

is one of the hardest forms of Almighty writing. It is perhaps necessary for the spirit to keep that writing constantly before it (and in this is partly disclosed a solution of the problem), for with it in vision there is no escape down the highways and byways of self-deception.

But this experience of suffering beyond the self sooner or later comes back to the self again. It is in very truth one's own problem; it beats at the doors of personal experience. It is real and painful just because it beats at the self, and eventually, if the self is honest, is absorbed. Tragedy in the outside world becomes personal tragedy, suffering in innocence becomes personal suffering; there is no refuge in the feeling of helplessness, there is no refuge in the contemplation of tragedy as a far-off event. The whole point of the tragedy of suffering in the Christian religion, a form of suffering which receives all the poignancy which human experience can give to it, experience of innocence, and experience of the waste of the good, is that it should be acknowledged in the self. It is the drama not only of the Christ, it is the drama of the living experience of the self that feels and reflects. The experience of the life of Christ as religion is the experience of one who lives in that life. The Passion and the Cross must be known within the self; to be living and real, to be a problem, it must be absorbed into personal responsibility and personal knowledge. The felt pain of suffering in others must come back to the suffering in the self. It is the problem of the self. It is the issue between an individual man and his Maker. That issue is partly found in "bearing more woes than all his sins deserve". Indeed, until that point is reached there is no problem. Suffering for sins is hardly a problem to the reflective man.

The focus of solution is in the self, even when that self ranges at large to accept all the mystery of apparent inexplicable pain seen to exist in others.

THE CHOICE OF VALUES

At this point a choice of values cannot be ignored, the matter cannot be argued against a background of neutral grey. Assuming, then, that the focus of the problem is at last found in the self, the solution will partly rest upon what the self does with

it. Inevitably the self is faced with choices; it must make up its mind continuously about certain alternatives before it. It must strive for the true solution, or, if there is no solution, accept that fact; but the striving will imply continuous choice. And since continuous life is continuous experience, the solution will never be final in the sense that nothing more can be added to it. There cannot be any hard-and-fast dogmatic explanation. The explanation, if there is one, must be shared; it must be continuously explored; and these facts eliminate dogmatic completeness.

The necessity of the choice of values brings into operation the whole person with the whole experience of life. The person must choose, for instance, between the goal of life as the experience of pleasure, or the goal of life as the experience of something else. The assumption that pleasure is the goal of life must be discarded by the reflective person; then there is left a goal which possesses a higher quality than pleasure: that quality involves suffering. The kind of life that Gautama would have known in his palace, untouched by suffering, is considered to be less than the kind of life he knew when he went out to embrace suffering. The choice of values imposes a voluntary choice of suffering—or a goal in life in which suffering is understood.

This goal is not completely mysterious, for there is no real joy in life for the reflective person without knowledge. To know is the quick of his being, and he cannot know, at least the nature of his life—unless he accepts suffering. To master existence, which is the end of knowledge, is to master all sides and depths of existence; and, since suffering most assuredly is on all sides and in all depths of life, existence is not mastered until that is mastered also. No man is a complete man—so the choice of values would dictate—until he is at home in a tragic universe as well as a beautiful one: since there is no real joy apart from the mastery of suffering. If harmony is joy, and real joy is peace, peace is only secured by the spirit being in command of evil as well as of good.

In this is involved the indisputable secret of those who have suffered most. If they have not been overwhelmed—and that must always be possible in an experience in which so much is at stake—if they have not been overwhelmed, they have

fought their way through to an inner peace not far away from real joy. They know: they have been tried in the furnace, and the trial has offered them a knowledge denied to other men. They have been driven to spiritual reflection, and that kind of reflection has enabled them to master evil. And a mastery of that always implies a mastery of the good.

Thus the fundamental disclosure of tragedy is reached. Tragedy in art is suffering seen through beauty: the beauty is not merely an addition, a glass through which the tragic is seen, but a beauty which is shot through the nature of the suffering itself. The very foundation of evil is seen to be interwoven with the good, and the mighty fact is disclosed that the good is not injured thereby (indeed, only made clearer and more resplendent), but that evil is conquered by it. The artistic representation is only symbolic of the reality of the universe; artistic tragedy only recalls what is known in experience, that in true mastery good and evil are not balanced together—the good is always triumphant. Herein lies the inner peace of suffering; it reaches the disclosure that the heart of the universe is supremely good, that good is the ultimate reality; in its light the nature of evil fades away. A point is reached where the true illumination is all good, evil is seen no more. This illumination can only be reached—so the choice of values declares—when suffering is interwoven into the ultimate goal of existence. In this sense the problem is solved. Suffering leads to joy, and, vice versa, true joy leads to suffering. If suffering is brought to the focus of the self, and the self is involved in choices of value, the problem is solved by the conclusion that suffering of itself discloses that the universe is good.

This, of course, is the experience of religion reached in another way. In the relationship between man and God there is always an element of acute pain. "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips." Before the vision of the Highest there is always the feeling of worthlessness, but before that vision also is always the experience of the redemption of the worthlessness by the movement of grace in the Highest. The unity of fulfilled knowledge is eventually given, but that knowledge is only attained—indeed, only is knowledge, only real and of worth, only what it is—when it is bought through spiritual

exposure and pain. A criticism of the universe and a criticism of God may be offered because these facts are what they are; but such criticism—as has already been seen—only skims the surface of reality. In pretending to go to the heart of truth it leads to the negation which is pessimism, and pessimism is untrue, because it is unreal.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion need not be left there, for we can yet enter into these inconclusive experiences that convince just because they do not define and dogmatize. It has been seen that the total movement of suffering is towards the self—that is to say, the self becomes the focus of the problem, and there is no problem outside it save in the relationship with God. The first step of real solution, therefore, is the adoption of suffering within the self. The universe in all its challenge comes alive within the self and nowhere else. The real person is the person who reflects within himself all the forces of reality that stream through the seen and unseen world. The unreal person is he who turns himself into a shadow in the presence of these forces. Greatness in man is universally regarded as the will and the power to become the centre of these forces: a centre not fixed as a meeting point, but one that moves in depth. Great men, it is universally acknowledged, are those who have moved to meet suffering, who have been the centre of its force in a depth to which no real limit could be seen. There is no finality, only movement—a movement of the self to meet the force, and a movement of the force to meet the self. Greatness has been sanctified by sacrifice, and sacrifice has been imperative upon greatness, for only thus could it meet the forces of evil and eliminate them by the declaration of the reality of good in personality.

The supremacy of self in the supremacy of greatness has been the declaration of the principle that all suffering is solved within the self—in union with God. The great man in the declaration of his reality is the epitome of this principle.

Finally, this is not conclusive in dogmatic principle, for in the great man is seen only a part of the reality; there is much in him that is not real. He is only the promise of the truth,

never the truth itself; he is only the stained glass through which there shines the infinite beyond. This is the true expression of the fact that man does not see all; the great plan is hidden from him; he is bidden to the feast and allowed to partake of it, but whence it comes and how it shall end he knows not. In this humility of spiritual ignorance he bows before the truth, and is glad only of the opportunity to serve its endless purpose and partake of its ceaseless creation.

HUMAN DESTINY

Members of our Free Religious Movement profess no distinctive doctrine of the after-life; they agree in rejecting the assumption that religious faith necessarily involves belief in any particular doctrine of human destiny. Arguments for immortality, weighty as they may be, create no certitude; conviction is born of personal experience, or rests on authority. But assurance of immortality cannot reasonably be based on an historic event—i.e., the resurrection of Jesus—and the evidence for a 'subtle body' is as yet inconclusive. Data which indicate survival of death afford no proof of immortal life, for immortality is a spiritual concept; it is realizable only in God through awareness of the immortal principle in man. But a future life that shall conserve the value of personality must allow of successiveness in Time. The experimental approach should not be depreciated; prejudice against it derives in part from the traditional Christian assumption, which is here rejected, that a single earth-life determines the soul's destiny for evermore. We judge as strong and persuasive the argument that nothing which is of value in a moral universe will be destroyed; but whether this argument suffices to sustain belief in the eternal conservation of human personalities is a question which cannot be authoritatively answered. The Divine Purpose is being fulfilled here and now.

CHRISTIANS manifest considerable divergences in their approach to the question of a future life and the idea of immortality. This divergence is reflected in the present Report. While Unitarians share the aspirations and hopes, as well as the common heritage, of all Christians, they profess no distinctive doctrine concerning the after-life and own no key for the unlocking of closed doors. A Unitarian is free to believe or to disbelieve in a future life, according to his reading of the evidence, the measure of his faith, and his acceptance, or rejection, of authoritative teaching. What alone distinguishes the members of our Free Religious Movement on this issue is the open acknowledgment of the diversity of judgment among them and their pronounced dislike of any assumption that

religious faith necessarily involves belief in any particular doctrine of human destiny. Religious profession, they say, in no wise demands of the individual believer that he should believe in personal immortality, though there are many for whom this belief is an essential article of faith.

The traditional arguments for immortality have cumulative weight, but lack clinching power. Even the theologian who maintains or restates these arguments has usually to concede that in the end assurance rests not on the conclusion of an argument, however forceful, but on the believer's faith in the benevolence and justice of the Determiner of Destiny. Cogent these arguments may be, but of themselves they create no certitude, no final conviction that spirit triumphs over matter. Such conviction is always personal, born of experience, created by suffering or sorrow. If this be lacking, the unphilosophical Christian usually bases his belief in immortality on authority; he believes, or professes to believe, because the Church, or the Bible, or hallowed teaching, persuades him that death is not the end of human life, but a gateway into fuller life beyond. Catholics have as a rule greater assurance than most Protestants, who suffer in this regard from lack of definite doctrine; the old eschatology¹ is out-moded and no longer acceptable to educated Christians who inherit a measure of rationalism with their Christianity; the new eschatology is in process of making.

The "sure and certain hope" lacks expression in modern terms and lacks also an historical ground on which this hope may be based.

This ground was formerly supplied by the traditional teaching of the resurrection of Jesus as reported in the Gospels, interpreted by St. Paul, and preserved in the Creeds. Jesus is the "first fruits", since his resurrection prefigures the raising of all faithful souls. At first regarded as a unique and miraculous event, the story of Jesus' triumph over death became accepted, within the framework of Judaistic ideas, as the divine demonstration of a universal resurrection when all flesh would be subject to the judgment of God.

¹ Eschatology, from the Greek word "eschatos", meaning "last". The use of this term, for which no familiar synonym exists, has shorthand value as indicating a doctrine of the "last things", embracing the ideas of life after death, divine judgment, heaven and hell and the consummation of the age.

Although it is not our purpose to discuss the historical evidence for the resurrection or for the doctrines deriving from it, we point out that Christian orthodoxy is to this day committed in confession and creed to belief in the resurrection of Jesus, and that countless Christians do sincerely and literally base their assurance of immortality on this traditional belief. None the less Christian scholars are far from unanimous in interpreting the evidence according to the traditional pattern or in crediting the narratives on which the doctrine depends. Aware of the insecurity of a theology based on miracle and of the conflicting accounts of the post-resurrection appearances, modern apologists are usually reluctant to draw any universal conclusion from a particular event, however epochal that event may be presumed to be. Theologians have travelled far since the day when doubts about the physical resurrection of Jesus were thought to imperil the foundations of the Christian faith. We hold that even if the evidence for Jesus' resurrection were reliable, the inference which Paul and subsequent exponents have drawn from it would still be open to serious doubt. If it be assumed that Jesus was an exceptional person who partook of God's nature in a superlative degree not attainable by ordinary men, it cannot logically follow that his supernatural resurrection provides a pattern or a presage of the resurrection of ordinary, unexceptional men. This is implied whether or not we believe in a physical resurrection. Actually the one safe assertion on this issue—the only point on which common agreement obtains—is the negative one, that the notion of a physical resurrection is wholly incompatible with received knowledge of the natural world. We may thus assume that the argument from an historic event is no longer tenable, or is rendered so insecure as to be all but useless, unless we can discover some alternative theory which explains, though discrepancies remain, the disciples' conviction that their crucified Master was indeed the Risen Lord.

A possible alternative is provided in the claim of recent investigators that Jesus may have appeared after the crucifixion, in a resurrection-body—*i.e.*, a "subtle" or etheric body. This theory leaves unsolved the riddle of the empty tomb, but in other respects it is not without a certain plausibility, although, in the nature of the case, it must remain an asseveration in-

capable of proof. The theory is a modernized version of a belief widely current in the ancient world and accepted by many people in India and elsewhere to-day. Briefly stated, it assumes the co-existence with the physical body of a "subtle" counterpart or duplicate which withdraws from the physical envelope at death and exists thereafter in its own environment independently. This theory, were it established, would provide strong evidence for survival. The evidence, however, though convincing to some members of this Commission, is as yet unfamiliar and inconclusive, and cannot therefore be used for providing an established equivalent to the doctrine of a physical resurrection.

It should further be pointed out that the weightier conclusions of accredited psychical investigators, even were such conclusions generally accepted as indicative of the nature and manner of human survival, would still leave the spiritual and metaphysical aspects of our question unresolved. A doctrine of immortality cannot be founded on empirical or experimental evidence alone. It is desirable, therefore, to distinguish between parallel methods of approach to our problem, the empirical and the religious (or, alternatively, the experimental and the spiritual). How we describe these two approaches is less important than their realization.

If we pursue this quest empirically, we essay to build up a case for human survival of death, collecting, sifting and interpreting the data, spontaneous and experimental, which exponents of Spiritualism and the disciplined practitioners of psychical research provide. Pursuing the quest religiously, we assume the spiritual nature of man (since human personality is greater than the sum of its organic elements) and deduce therefrom a doctrine of immortality. The empirical approach leads to a finite conclusion whether or not that conclusion favours survival; a conclusion with infinite implications whether or not personal immortality be involved. More explicitly, the empirical approach is limited to the assembling of evidence which seems to support the hypothesis of personal survival, while the religious approach is concerned to determine a doctrine of immortality. The former is a space-time process concerned with establishing the preservation of human identity within a temporal order in some other "world", while the latter trans-

cends space-time in seeking to establish the eternal reality of the immortal principle in man.

Failure to distinguish between these two aims is a cause of much muddled thinking in this field of enquiry, for though it may be true that immortality implies survival, the converse proposition that survival necessarily involves immortality is a consequence of confusing two universes of discourse. Thus data which might reasonably be interpreted as indicating the survival of personality might be quite irrelevant as proof of personal immortality. Even the doctrine of incarnation, implying a series of lives in the phenomenal world, is at least compatible with the notion that the life-principle which links the successive existences is finally annihilated or loses its particularity in a larger whole.

Immortality is essentially a religious and spiritual concept. This, however, implies no dualism of disparate "universes", a spiritual and a physical. It denotes rather the supremacy of the spiritual as suffusing but also transcending the physical. The spiritual universe as thus conceived is the reality we apprehend in the eternal values. And eternal values are grounded in God. Only in a value-conserving universe is immortality a conceivable idea. God, we say, is the value-keeper. Therefore, immortality is realizable only in God, the Fount of all values.

Some thinkers maintain that personal immortality is a necessary corollary of Christian theism, since a God of Love must ever be mindful of the objects of His love. This argument is not conclusive, even admitting its assumptions, for it is conceivable that a creature might forfeit God's love by persistent lapses from grace, thus proving his incapacity to respond to the challenge of love. If immortality is the birthright of every soul, it is only in virtue of the immortal principle within the soul, or, alternatively, those mortals put on immortality who become aware of the immortal principle in their own being. Thus, we might say of the human soul that in fulfilling the promise of its essential nature, embodying in some degree the eternal values of goodness, beauty and truth, it partakes of the essence of God, and hence of God's immortality. That which is divine in the man is imperishable. That which is imperishable in the man is divine. It is in this thought that

we discover the fundamental, but universalized, truth of the doctrine of incarnation, God in man. The human soul is immortal in virtue of the divinity that is within him. Realizing this inherent divinity, he becomes immortal, in that he shares in the immortality of God. Or, as Berdyaev puts it, "What is eternal and immortal in man is not the psychical or physical element as such, but the spiritual element which . . . realizes the image and likeness of God".

It is the merit of such presentation of immortality that it lifts the idea above the level of self-interest and of personal ends on to a plane where time has no dominion. In this, religion's ascendant realm, the question of survival and persistence is wholly subordinate because life becomes eternal life, life in God. Awareness of time is transcended because eternal being is cognizant not of events and processes, but of a "now" signifying the transfiguration of self-consciousness in the universal consciousness of God. "God is eternal and in some measure man may share His eternal life", wrote Philip Wicksteed. "Creatures of time as we are, we may rise more and more as our life strengthens and deepens into a life to which succession does not indeed cease to matter, but to which it matters less and less, while co-existence matters more and more. We, too, in our measure, seeing God, may see as God sees." Eternal life is life in God. This life is intrinsically worthy, since it serves no ends higher than its own.

Remote and mystical as this conception may appear to the practical mind, it would be erroneous to regard it as escapism, or as other-worldliness. It implies rather a tempering of the religion of time—its exhilaration of effort and combat, its movement and progress and its gospel of a heavenly kingdom on earth—by a religion of eternity, which alone invests with meaning the changes and developments of time. The mediaeval mystic knew nothing of the "forward view" of the modern man, or of progress towards an earthly City of God. He saw time, says Wicksteed, "as a creation, and its succession as recording nothing that was essential to the glory and bliss of the Creator". That conception, for all its disharmony with current thought, contains an insight worth preserving, in so far as it reminds us that the temporal order has significance only in relation to an eternal order which transcends it. Human

action has significance because eternal values give it significance. Our deepest insight discloses the eternal within time and beyond time. The idea of succession is not banished, for if it were there could be no human striving, no purpose and no goal. Without a goal towards which to strive, life, as we know it, is purposeless, and a purposeless life lacks significance.

That, however, is a mistaken notion which represents the immortal quest as though it were the chase of a mirage, a ceaseless striving towards an ever-receding goal, a pursuit of which the doughtiest spiritual athlete might tire. A celestialized Darwinism of this kind needs as corrective the ideas of attainment and of rest, and of the benison of peace. A perpetual, never-ceasing quest is an earthly not a spiritual ideal.

Even so, man is a creature who strives and hopes and wills. Though he apprehend and seek to embody eternal values, he is himself subject to time's dominion. There is point in the late Professor Dawes Hicks' remark that "a timeless life is a contradiction in terms". Life requires successiveness. It would seem, therefore, that a future life, if it be thought of as conserving the value of personality, must also allow of successiveness; it must be in some sense durational, subject to time. If this be allowed, if release from the physical body carries with it no release from time, and a future life in time is a reasonable expectation, it follows that the empirical approach to the problem of human destiny has also its validity and ought not to be airily dismissed, as sometimes it is, as though it could have no conceivable bearing on religion. In a proximate after-death environment, discarnate personality would be aware, as in this world, of a time-transcending Reality, but his environment would itself have significance, even as our earthly environment has significance, as providing a new sphere for the experience of values, and a further field for the training of the soul.

The late Archbishop Temple's pronouncement, in his Gifford Lectures, that "Except as implied in the righteousness and love of God immortality is not a religious interest at all", appears dubiously dogmatic if we accept the view that the empirical approach and the religious approach are complementary rather than antithetical. When he adds, "It is therefore positively undesirable that there should be experimental proof of man's survival of death", he unwittingly creates grave concern in many minds,

especially among those Christian believers who have hope of reunion with loved ones in the after-death state. Can any evidence, they say, which confirms or strengthens this assurance be "positively undesirable"? Archbishop Temple is less than just to the empirical approach. Mindful of its limitations though we are, we cannot conceive of any extension of knowledge—least of all any possible extension in this direction—as being in itself undesirable; nor are we so pessimistic as he appears to be of the use which might be made of such knowledge were it forthcoming. Knowledge which revealed new vistas of the "next world" and which lightened, if partially, our ignorance of human destiny should be welcomed, not despised.

The prejudice against the empirical approach arises in part out of the traditional Christian assumption that earth is the valley of decision. The idea that a single earth-life determines for evermore the fate of the human soul is a limitation of the Christian gospel in harmony with an eschatological scheme. Yet this is what the Church has taught and still teaches, implicitly if not always with the explicitness of a bolder age. On this side of death, the soul lives out its span of life, be its years many or few, its passage smooth or rough; on the other side, it reaps everlastingly the results of its sowing on earth. The choice is made. Never more can repentance avail to give the erring soul a second chance. As a flail for sinners such teaching may have had its practical use; none the less it is utterly at variance with man's humaner sentiments and irreconcilable with a gospel of justice and love. Experimental demonstration of survival, if ever it were forthcoming, would strengthen faith's assurance that death is an episode, a gateway into another environment where the soul, released of its earth-body, might be granted further opportunity for purgation, achievement and growth in the knowledge and love of God. If, as Keats discerned, this world is a school, a vale of soul-making, it seems scarcely conceivable that this physical world should be the only world for the schooling of souls, a "system of spirit-creation" (as Keats puts it) which terminates suddenly at the moment of the body's dissolution. If this were so, then Spirit would be subject to matter again and again with every physical death.

The moral argument, which is not lightly to be set aside,

may be formulated biologically in terms of the process of life's development on this planet. The emergence of individuality seems to be a part of the plan; "the higher the scale of human life the more we feel that it is the individual that counts and the more we feel that the individual has a duty to make himself as perfect, as an individual, as possible". As thus stated by Canon Harold Anson, the argument meets with formidable difficulties from science, from philosophy and from religion. To name but one: within the context of evolution the achievement of individuality may be not the final goal but a stage in life's planetary ascent; it may be the supreme end of the self-conscious individual to transcend his own individuality, contributing his hard-won selfhood to a larger whole. Arguments drawn from natural science are double-edged when applied to spiritual ends. Finite particulars lead only to finite conclusions.

The moral argument is perhaps most persuasive when we bear in mind the frustrations of the personal life, even at its fullest and noblest. Life's largesse is scattered with plenitude or with paucity; some persons are denied opportunity which others bountifully enjoy. Everywhere a prodigious inequality rules the lives of men. At its best, a human life is incomplete, unfulfilled. "How small a part of my plans have I been able to carry out", said James Martineau as old age drew near. "Nothing is so plain as that life at its fullest on earth is but a fragment." So conceived, the immortal hope is no mean egotistical desire for persistence or reward; it rests rather on an assurance that a moral universe will destroy no single fragment of conscious life which has within it some seed of divine promise, nor deny to any frustrate soul the completion it seeks.

Whether completion necessarily implies the conservation of personality is an open question which can receive no final answer here, nor has concurrence been sought among us. On this point, reticence, even undue reticence, is more desirable than incautious acceptance of revelations concerning the destiny of souls in the heavenly worlds, for we are mindful of the ease with which physical categories can be falsely transposed into a non-physical world. This only we would add: the earth-formed individual man is a resultant of heredity and experience, mutable and transient. Not this is immortal. That only can be immortal in man which is spiritually sustained through all

transitions, an innermost self or immortal principle whose hell is isolation, whose heaven is the fellowship of God.

As the reader will have noticed, the signatories of this Report, mindful of varying attitudes towards doctrines of the future life, make no attempt to determine the answers to specific questions, least of all to provide a definitive statement which might be regarded as in any sense authoritative. They are, however, agreed on certain basal affirmations which may be summarized as follows:

(1) A religious view of life implies an assurance not that men are by nature immortal, as self-conscious beings, in virtue of their humanity, but that the supreme values which give significance and direction to human lives are immortal—*i.e.*, cosmically and eternally conserved. (2) Immortal life, therefore, is conceivable only as life in God, who is the Conservator of Values. A religious view of immortality is not concerned with persistence or everlastingness as such; so conceived, as implying the mere continuance of the human individual in some extra-terrestrial sphere, the idea of immortality lacks that essential significance and value which a religious view of life implies. (3) Evidence, therefore, which points to the prolongation of temporal existence is not proof of immortal life, although such evidence may provide grounds for presuming personal immortality in so far as it is able to demonstrate the persistence of human individuality after death. (4) Only as we assume a divine element (immortal principle) in man which links the individual soul with the Divine Reality does immortality become a conceivable idea or a realizable end. Belief in immortal life is contingent on belief in God.

Finally it should be said that concern for human destiny beyond this world need be in no respect inimical to a lively concern for human destiny within this world. The world owes most not to the sceptic or the rosebud-gatherer, but to the man of spiritual insight; he is the realist and reformer. The reverent agnostic is more to be admired than the gnostic who veils his ignorance in presumptuous make-believe. Some persons are capable of the utmost sacrifice of personal ease or estate, regardless of security of or reward in this life or any life, on earth or in heaven; but others there are who derive

from faith and spiritual perception a firm belief in a destiny for men beyond this world, an inspiration which girds them for battle, sustains them in sorrow, and endows them with courageous and befriending love. Their master-motive is acceptance of life, not rejection or escape. Belief in a Divine Purpose makes realists and reformers of us all, for here and now is this Purpose being fulfilled, a Purpose whose deepest secrets no earthling can divine.

NOTE TO PAPER ON HUMAN DESTINY

ONE member of the Commission finds it impossible to support the distinction between an eternal order and a temporal order, and he is of the opinion that the grounds given above for making the distinction will not bear strict examination. The member indicates his point of view, in bare outline, as follows:

The metaphysical idea of eternity is an artificial device that belongs to the history of philosophy. It was created to compensate for the deficiencies which men, in the immaturity of their knowledge and wisdom, mistakenly attributed to the temporal world. Some fairly modern philosophical writers have unwisely attempted to ascribe the fundamental characteristics of time to eternity. This ignores the metaphysical history of the term "eternity" and causes much confusion to writer and reader alike, particularly as the metaphysical sense of the term (*i.e.*, timelessness) usually persists in intruding. The ascription of temporal characteristics to eternity fogs the issue; such characteristics should be referred to a temporal order, where they belong. The metaphysical sense of the term "eternity" properly refers to a non-temporal order.

The idea of eternity is incomprehensible; we have no experience whatever, nor even the slightest indication, of a non-temporal order, and so the term "eternity" really has no meaning for us: illustrations are often furnished that are supposed to point to an eternal order, but, in fact, they point only to a temporal order in which there are various kinds of time. Further, the postulation of an eternal order results in a dualism between the temporal and the non-temporal that cannot be resolved. Again, this dualism tends to make us regard the temporal order as being in some sense unreal, and as morality is bound up with the temporal order, morality must also in some sense be unreal. The logical consequence of this attitude is a tendency to turn away from this life as if there were nothing of real worth in it, nothing to make the heart glad and the spirit rejoice. On the contrary, however, in the humblest and simplest, in the most common and ordinary things of life can often be found a worth and a wonder that bespeak the very

presence of God. There is glorious reality, worth and meaning in this life, and if the religion of the near future is to be of any service to mankind, this fact will require to be one of its fundamental affirmations.

A temporal order, and only a temporal order, can satisfy all the needs of a mature religion. If, instead of postulating two incompatible worlds, one eternal and the other temporal, we recognize that there is only one world—*viz.*, a temporal world—we avoid the difficulties stated above. On the view now put forward the world is a "sacramental universe". We are aware at present only of certain aspects of this sacramental universe. From time to time we dimly apprehend other aspects of the universe—*e.g.*, in mystical experience. There may well be many aspects which as yet we cannot in any degree apprehend. Yet it is all *one* sacramental universe, a world shot through and through with Spirit, a world in which God moves and has His being. This universe is temporal, but it is not limited to "clock time"; even we ourselves are aware of other kinds of time—for example, the "now" in which we can hold a complicated and lengthy passage of music "present" in our minds and appreciate the passage as a whole made up of parts indicates a kind of time distinct from "clock time". The late Professor A. A. Bowman coined the term "spirit-time" to describe one distinctive kind of time. The ultimate instance of spirit-time, for Bowman, is the "Universal Spirit whom men call God", whose nature as spirit is definable in terms of a perfect adjustment of, so to say, all the past to all the future in the unity of an experience that is best described as an infinite and temporal "now". The above is enough to indicate that the admitted limitations of "clock time" do not necessitate our postulating an eternal order; the limitations are made good by the existence of other kinds of time. It is indicative of an important philosophic trend that Professor A. E. Taylor insists on the reality of time and morality; that Professor John Laird sees no inconsistency in the idea of a perfect being who, existing in time, enjoys and exercises his perfections in the temporal; and that Professor John Macmurray condemns outright the two-world view.

It is sometimes said that if there were no eternal order, moral values would have no permanence. Strictly speaking, existential

permanence has no great relevance in the moral field. It is the worthwhile nature of goodness that matters, not its continued power to exist. At its best, devotion to goodness is called out by the intrinsic nature of the good, irrespective of whether that good is moving towards victory or defeat, perpetuity or oblivion. Having stated this, the following can be added. We have seen that the idea of eternity is not necessary to the idea of God. God is permanent, and moral values have permanence in God. Moral values can also be permanent in man, but they are not necessarily so. The good in man is real, but he can let it slip from him. It is man's task to retain and further the good that is in him. He has to win his way.

One reason often given for postulating an eternal order is that it offers a means of escape from the strife that characterizes a temporal order. To wish to escape from strife, however, is to miss the whole significance of life. Strife is a basic characteristic of life. Strife, endeavour, aspiration and creation, these terms represent an ascending scale reaching unto Godhead. Points on the scale vary in quality, but the characteristic marks of striving, found at the bottom of the scale, are also essentially present in the act of creation. Satisfaction, fellowship and the "peace that passeth understanding" are by-products, like happiness, and are found in and through worthwhile striving. Nor, even in this life, need we lack genuine achievement. Moreover, the idea of one sacramental temporal universe is quite consistent with the idea of death as a form of birth into planes of existence other than this life, wherein satisfaction, fellowship, peace and achievement all mount in richness and intensity. As the comparatively primitive strife with evil becomes less and less necessary and the individual soul strives to progress from good to more extensive and more varied good, strife is eventually wholly lost and re-found in creativity, and then independent responsible souls in the fullness of their stature commune and work with God.

RELIGION AND RELIGIONS

Modern study emphasizes (a) the evolution of religion, (b) the multiplicity of its developed forms. Each of these facts raises large issues.

(a) *It is sometimes urged that religion belongs essentially to the childhood of the race. Religion took its rise in primitive times, and as an integral part of human experience it is dependent for its expression on the intellectual and social development of mankind. It is, however, in the highest and not the lowest forms of religion that we have the truest expression of its meaning. Religion begins in darkness and ignorance: it moves to the light of that "God-consciousness" which is the summit of human endeavour.*

(b) *Religious difference comes to us as an aspect of the differing traditions which divide mankind. Each of the historic faiths grew up in relative isolation. Each in consequence rests upon a limited view of history and revelation, which modern knowledge tends to undermine. While religions must preserve their own individuality, they must widen their outlook by incorporating the insight of seers who stand outside their own tradition. Christianity may find renewal and enlargement through contact with the distinctive wisdom of India. The way of growth is by the extension of knowledge and sympathy, which will transform the existing forms of religion and provide a spiritual basis for the unity of mankind.*

IN modern times religion has been made the subject of scientific study. The result has been to emphasize two main facts: (a) that religion as we know it has arisen through an evolutionary process, (b) that developed religion assumes many different forms. Each of these facts raises issues of the greatest possible importance.

(a) Modern study shows that religion plays a part of great significance in the life of existing "primitive" peoples, like the aborigines of Australia. It is natural to infer that religiously, as in other respects, such peoples represent a phase of development through which mankind as a whole has passed. That, of course, does not imply that any existing form of religious life, such as Australian Totemism, can be regarded as strictly

primitive. Many different theories have been propounded as to the psychological basis of religion. It cannot be said that any particular theory has so far met with universal acceptance. Certain factors are, however, widely recognized, such as the emotion of awe in face of those elements in man's material and social environment and his inner experience which baffle his understanding and elude his attempt at explanation in terms of actual knowledge.

From facts like these inferences are sometimes drawn which are hostile to the claim of religion as a permanent and necessary factor in human life and thought. Bertrand Russell has urged that religion belongs, not simply in its beginnings but in its essence, to the childhood of the race. As the race develops towards an increasingly adult manhood, he maintains, it must learn to emancipate itself from religious influences. There are many to-day who share this mode of thought. The religious attitude to the world, it is suggested, began historically through man's ignorance of the forces which shape and condition his life, and it is rooted essentially in such ignorance. Religious belief, it is held, is in all its phases, from the most primitive to the most developed, the product of illusion. Now, it must, of course, be admitted that in the shaping of religious belief both in primitive and in historical times ignorance and illusion have played a considerable part. The expression of religion in terms of belief naturally varies with man's intellectual and spiritual development. Religion is an organic part of human experience, and the forms which it assumes must depend on the general character of that experience. At a certain stage of growth men believe in gods as individual beings, to whom they may fittingly offer sacrifice for the supply of the gods' needs, and of whom they ask in return particular benefits, which the gods will specifically send. It does not follow that such crude and "external" beliefs belong to the essence of man's conception of the divine or of the nature of prayer. It is an altogether unwarranted assumption that because religion as we know it has arisen from lowly beginnings, it is in its earliest and least developed forms that its truest expression is to be found. The contrary is the case. Take the analogy of human personality. Personality develops from the mind of the child. The qualities and experiences of childhood play a vital part as a stage of

human growth. The child, we are told, is "father of the man". Yet it is in the man, and not in the child, that the capacities of personality are most fully revealed. So in religion: it is in its highest and most developed forms—in the life and work, above all, of the great mystics—that it has attained its fullest expression.

Whether or not we believe that religion is a permanent factor in human life naturally depends on our belief about the nature of reality. That is dealt with elsewhere in the Report. It suffices here to emphasize the fact that there is nothing whatsoever in the story of religion, so far as we can read it, which is incompatible with an affirmative view. The evolution of religion is an aspect of the evolution of human consciousness. At an early period of his history, it would appear, man becomes aware, however dimly, of the deeper realm of being in which his spirit lives. Religion is his expression of that awareness. Man's religious consciousness is embodied in forms varying according to the depth and clearness of his insight. It gives rise at an early stage to the sense of a vague and undifferentiated Power expressed pre-eminently in whatever appeals specially to the sense of mystery. At a later time it produces the figures of the gods, to whom he offers worship. The great forward step in religious evolution is taken when, in different ages and different lands, the vision emerges clearly and definitely in human consciousness of the ultimate Power and Principle of the universe as one, and as immanent in the life and soul of man himself. So in the person of the great seers and mystics man rises to the supreme attainment of "God-consciousness"—the end and goal of the religious quest. In heart and soul and life he strives to make himself one with God, and in that oneness life itself finds its fulfilment.

(b) In modern times we have come increasingly to recognize the width and range of man's religious response. In the light of modern knowledge religion naturally appears as a reaction to life which arises spontaneously in the human spirit at a certain stage of growth. But in the course of its development religion assumes many different forms at approximately the same cultural and social level. Side by side with Christianity we have two other great world-religions—Buddhism and Islam. We have also the persistence in India and China of the native religions

of Hinduism and Confucianism, which retain the allegiance of many educated and thinking men.¹ What is to be said of these facts? What is the ground of such differences? How are the great religions to be related to one another? Can they exist permanently side by side, or is there to be an eventual unification? If so, on what basis shall it be achieved?

It is important, first of all, to recognize the existing fact of separateness and to see as clearly as we can the grounds on which it rests. "Religions are many, reason is one, we are all brothers": such, it is said, is the attitude which has been widely prevalent in China. But if "reason is one" and "we are all brothers"; if moreover there is at the heart of religion in all its expressions a common awareness of unseen Reality, why should religions be "many"? There are naturally many stages of religious growth, but that is no reason why differences should persist on an approximately common level.

In a certain sense, of course, religion is bound to vary in its expression from individual to individual. Men have different temperaments and different needs, and the actual quality of their religious life must differ accordingly. That is true, but it is irrelevant to the main issue. The differences of temperament that exist among us, the differences of emotional response to the deeper Reality of the universe, do not correspond to the differences which separate the great historic faiths. If we take any one of these faiths, we shall find that there is as much difference among its adherents in these respects as there is between its adherents and those of its rivals. Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus differ among themselves in the inner quality of their being as much as they differ from men of another faith. It is sometimes said that differences of climate or of race are the essential factors beneath differences of religion. It is certainly true that climatic differences have played their part in shaping the forms of religious life and thought. In early times the gods men worshipped were identified with the forces of Nature, and the particular forces which were deified varied from place to place. Yahweh was at first a mountain god; Zeus

¹ Professor W. E. Hocking has pointed out that a very small percentage of the people of India, China and Japan have been converted to Christianity. "In India roughly 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the population are listed as Christian; in China $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1 per cent.; in Japan just $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1 per cent." ("Living Religions and a World Faith." P. 149.)

was a god of the sky. But with the development of thought such differences were increasingly transcended, and the gods assumed attributes independent of their particular origin. Yahweh and Zeus alike came to be conceived as universal powers. In different lands and climates religion undergoes a similar evolution; there is everywhere a tendency to the recognition of unity. Whatever their influence, climatic and geographical conditions are no final barrier. The great missionary religions have all succeeded in extending their hold in widely distant countries. For Christianity and Buddhism and Islam differences of climate are irrelevant to the gospel which they proclaim. So also with differences of race. It is sometimes said that this or that religious attitude is born in us and cannot be changed. "I belong to my race," says an English writer; "Christian culture is in my blood. I cannot see the universe as the Moslem sees it; I cannot know God or myself as the Hindu knows them." The suggestion is surely mistaken. Even though differences of religion may be in part determined by hereditary forces, such differences are always subject to the possibility of personal change. Racial differences are no insuperable obstacle to the growth of a new outlook. The spread of Christianity in Europe, of Buddhism in China, of Islam in Africa, is a sufficient indication of this fact.

The main factor in the transmission of the varying forms of religious life and thought is cultural and social tradition. Once a religion has come to be accepted by a given society, it elicits in its support a whole array of psychological and social forces which tend to secure its continued dominance. Tradition is an immensely powerful force. Yet it is never invincible. It can always be overcome by those who feel the need of a deeper and truer vision. It is characteristic of the modern situation that tradition is being increasingly modified. The inherited beliefs of all religions are subject to the challenge of thought and knowledge as never before.

Religious differences come to us as an aspect of our differing conditions. One essential factor in the situation is the relative isolation of the great streams of religious development. The historic faiths have in common this significant feature, that each of them rests on an essentially limited view of history. Each originated out of a particular line of tradition. The outlook

of each received its expression initially in terms of a particular culture. The gospel of Buddhism was shaped in terms of Indian thought; the gospel of Christianity was expressed in forms appropriate to Palestine (that does not imply that Christianity was subject in early years to only specifically Jewish influences, though Jewish influence was certainly predominant). Correspondingly each of the historic faiths rests upon a limited view of revelation. Each has its own body of sacred writings, to which it attaches a unique value and significance. It is, no doubt, freely admitted by the more liberal-minded adherents of each religion that other sacred writings contain elements of truth and value. But there still remains in each an essential limitation of outlook, resting on the relative historical accident of cultural isolation. The truth and value acknowledged in other systems are felt to be qualitatively different from those which each claims for itself.

Now it is this limitation of outlook, this conception of a unique revelation occurring on a particular line of religious development, which modern knowledge tends to undermine. In earlier times it was doubtless inevitable. There was no common view of human life and human history; there was no common knowledge of the world. To-day the position is radically changed. And therefore it becomes increasingly impossible to maintain a conception of Christianity, for example, which claims for the Hebrew and early Christian writings an inspiration and an authority which it is not prepared to extend to the writings of the sages and seers of ancient Greece and China and India as well as to those of modern prophets.

What is necessary to the growth of religion is primarily the extension of knowledge. The way of progress is along the line pursued in recent years by the "World Congress of Faiths", which seeks to bring together representatives of the different religions for the sake of mutual understanding. Mutual understanding in this instance brings more than tolerance and sympathy. By extending the scope of knowledge, it brings a wider vision. It helps us (as Professor Hocking points out in his illuminating work, "Living Religions and a World Faith") to find deliverance from bondage to what is accidental in our faith and to grasp its enduring essence. It has, indeed, been said that if we penetrate to the essence of all religions, we shall find that it is the same.

In a fundamental sense that is true. Religion has been defined, in its higher forms, as "a craving for unity with the whole of being". That craving underlies all historic faiths. But it does not find expression with equal fullness or clarity in all. The leaders of world-religion were none of them the mere passive recipients of a revelation given from above. The inspiration which they shared expressed itself through the medium of their personal insight. It was conditioned, on the one hand, by the measure of their spiritual attainment, on the other hand by the modes of thought distinctive of the tradition to which they were attached.

Each religion has its own particular genius, its own characteristic spirit, its own distinctive vision. Each, in other words, has its own individuality. And in this individuality lies in great part the strength of its appeal. Clearly, therefore, we cannot solve the problem of religious unity by adopting in place of existing religions with their concrete individuality a series of abstract truths with no special reference to their embodiment in history. Neither can we solve the problem by seeking to amalgamate existing religions forthwith as elements in an all-inclusive system. Such solutions are too facile. They ignore the richness and complexity of religious life. Religion, as Hocking says, must be universal—it must present truths which are of universal validity; but it must also be particular—it must be mediated through the work of certain outstanding personalities.

The way of religious growth is the way of increasing knowledge, with the enlargement and deepening of vision which that involves. We who are Christians must so enlarge the scope of our Christianity that it shall recognize the inspiration of non-Christian seers and prophets, and shall recognize it, not as an indication of God's mercy to the "heathen", but as a living phase of the movement of the Spirit which is expressed in Jesus. Take, for instance, the relation of Christianity to the religion of India. Radhakrishnan has said that "perhaps Christianity may find its rebirth to-day in the heritage of India". In recent years there has been a growing appreciation in the West of the higher aspects of Indian religion. The tendency has a particular interest for Unitarians. From its early days they have maintained a sympathetic relationship with the reform movement known as the Brahma Somaj. The attitude of many Unitarians

in the nineteenth century, moreover, was typified by the work which was done, and the wide and friendly personal contacts which were established, in India by Mary Carpenter in the cause of education and social reform. It is true that the theological outlook which has been characteristic of the main stream of Christian tradition differs widely from the distinctive outlook of India. But it is for this very reason that Indian teaching has a vital appeal to many thoughtful people in the West. While the Christian tradition mainly emphasizes the "otherness" of God, for Indian religion the central fact is the divine indwelling. "More than other religions," says Sir Charles Eliot in his monumental work on "Hinduism and Buddhism", "Hinduism appeals to the soul's immediate knowledge and experience of God." In the words of Rabindranath Tagore, "It is the practice of realizing and affirming the presence of the Infinite in all things which has been the constant inspiration of the Indian mind". This is the note continually recurring in the Upanishads. "He who knows all and sees all, and whose glory the universe shows, dwells as the Spirit of the divine city of Brahman in the region of the human heart. . . . There the wise find Him as joy and light and life eternal. . . . He cannot be seen by the eye, and words cannot reveal Him. He cannot be reached by the sense or by austerity or sacred actions. By the grace of wisdom and purity of mind He can be seen indivisible in the silence of meditation" (Mundaka Upanishad). This, too, is the characteristic note of the prophets and seers of later times. "Open thine eyes (cries Kabir), and thou shalt see; Him shalt thou see whom thy most secret soul doth love. . . . Awake and know the temple where thou dwellest, for in this shrine of flesh abideth God eternal."

In the higher religion of India the mystical attainment of union with God holds a central place. Indian piety has, indeed, often been criticized, with a good deal of justification, as unduly inward and insufficiently active. The criticism is sometimes extended to cover the essential conception on which Indian mysticism rests. Dr. MacNicol has said that Hinduism and Christianity "represent two contradictories that cannot be syncretized." The ground of the contention (as set forth in his book, "Is Christianity Unique?") is that, while Christianity maintains as an essential aspect of its teaching the reality of the

world of time and space in which we live, Hinduism regards it as *maya*—an unreality, an illusion. But Sir S. Radhakrishnan has sought to show that the doctrine of *maya*, as interpreted by the great thinkers of India, does not imply the non-existence of the world, but only its relative unreality. And that is surely the outcome of all profound spiritual experience. For the mystic, Christian and non-Christian alike, in comparison with the supreme fact of God all other facts are partial, incomplete, superficial; in God alone is absolute reality. It is true that the monistic idealism of Sankara—the main line of Indian philosophy—adopts a predominantly negative attitude towards the world, regarding it rather as a veil than as a vesture of the Eternal. But it must be remembered that there is another trend in the philosophy of India, represented by Ramanuja, whose teaching has exercised an immense influence on the religious life of the country. Ramanuja laid equal stress with Sankara on the indwelling presence of God as the Life and Light of the soul and on the quest of union with Him; but his emphasis was on the positive way of devotion (*bhakti*) and good works rather than on the negative way of detachment.

Indian thought is an increasing factor in Western experience. And while the Indian outlook differs radically from the dualism which has been characteristic of the West, it can be fully harmonized with what is essential in Christianity. It is indeed only in the light of the Eastern vision of the unity of man in its deeper being with the Universal Spirit that it becomes possible to interpret in a manner at once rational and satisfying the experience of Christian mystics and the Christological affirmations of the Church.

In this example of the enlargement of Christian teaching in the light of the vision and experience of the East, we have an indication of the true direction of religious growth. "The relation between religions (in the words of the Report of the American Commission of Laymen on Missions) must take increasingly the form of a common search for truth." So far as that path is pursued and each historic faith in its turn extends its scope and deepens its insight by contact with the thought and experience of the rest, mankind will find that basis of spirituality on which alone it is possible to build a true and enduring world-society.

NOTE TO PAPER ON "RELIGION AND RELIGIONS"

ONE member of the Commission wishes to express his agreement with the view, criticized in the Paper, that there is a different valuation of the spiritual significance of the time process in Indian religion as contrasted with Christianity. In his opinion it is quite correct to say that in Christianity a more positive value and purpose is ascribed to our life in time. In his opinion the validity of this view does not depend for its support on misinterpretations of the doctrine of *maya*, but is rooted in certain fundamental differences of outlook. These differences would have emerged even more clearly had the Paper given more consideration to the great popular sectarian religions of India and striven to discover the common basis that underlies both the lower and the higher forms of Indian religion. The writer agrees in the main with the view sketched by Betty Heimann, late Professor in the University of Halle-Wittenberg and now Lecturer in Sanskrit and Indian Philosophy in the School of Oriental Studies at the University of London, in her book "Indian and Western Philosophy: A Study in Contrasts". A more detailed proof of the position there put forward is given in other books by the same writer, not yet translated.

THE BIBLE

The Bible is an anthology of religious literature in which different levels of moral and spiritual perception are to be found. The Unitarian approach to it is determined by reason and modern knowledge. It is not to be regarded as a closed system of theology or inspiration. It belongs essentially to the literature of faith, and its true significance lies in the realm of the spirit, for it awakens religious feeling, strengthens and uplifts the mind and heart, and challenges the will of man to noble living.

The Unitarian sees God revealed progressively through a long period of evolution from Hebrew tribal deity to Universal Spirit.

The Bible's relevance to our day is not only that it provides a clue to the nature and purpose of God, but that it speaks to man's social condition and need. It teaches lessons that we require to learn in our national and international life. Fully to understand and appreciate the Bible, we must relate it to present events and trends. We then see the timelessness and depth of its wisdom.

The Unitarian finds "God's Word" not only in the Bible record of religious faith, but in any book or thought or deed which elevates the heart and mind, directs them Godward, and guides men's feet into ways of joy and peace.

THE Bible of to-day is a very different book from that which our forefathers handled and revered. That it should have remained unaffected by recent research, by the development of the historical method, the discoveries of archaeology, textual and higher criticism, and the comparative study of religion, was not to be expected. Modern knowledge was bound to change men's attitude to the book which is the source of the Christian faith and lead here to alterations in emphasis, there to denial and doubt, here to re-affirmation of neglected truths, there to modification of long-accepted doctrines. In short, the modern approach to the Bible has meant a re-valuation of the many documents of which it is composed and a re-orientation of faith.

During the past century the Bible has, indeed, passed through the fires of critical examination, yet not, as might at first be supposed, so much with loss as with considerable gain. For

with the progressive application to biblical study of those canons of interpretation which have been unhesitatingly applied in other fields, the meaning of the Bible both for earlier times and for to-day has become clearer and its true value for religion can be appreciated. What we now have is in many respects a new book, a better book, a book that has come surprisingly alive. No longer is it possible, for example, to regard the men of the Bible as only distantly related to ourselves, as figures in stained glass about whom is cast an aura of unreality or separating sanctity. They are real, and their religion is real. The events of their lives belong to the great sweep of history. They are one with us in a movement that is part of the story of mankind evolving down the ages. The lives and personalities of David and Jeremiah and Paul are known to us as they have never been known before. The figures of Amos, herdsman-prophet of righteousness, and Hosea, the compassionate husband and preacher of mercy, have gained an altogether new significance. The purpose of the books of Job and Jonah and Daniel is no longer obscure. For here we find men struggling with the deep problems of life, striving to discover the meaning of the existence of evil and suffering, to pierce the clouds that veil human destiny, to assure themselves of the supreme relevance of love and righteousness. The men of the Bible experienced God, and their thoughts and experiences are recorded for us. Their spiritual problems were not unlike our own: our spiritual needs are not essentially different from theirs. The Bible is thus a book that gives us insight into the spirit of man, a book wherein we see, as it were, our own faces mirrored darkly. Like every great record of man's deed and thoughts and aspirations, it is of perennial and universal interest.

But to say this is not to imply that the Bible is of only literary, antiquarian or cultural value. On the contrary, the new approach to the Bible reveals a book unique in the world's history because it is the repository of the religious experience of a whole people over a period of close upon 1500 years. This collection of sixty-six different documents forms a body of religious literature which shows at one and the same time a great variety, development and cohesion. Other sacred writings may awaken religious aspiration and nurture the spiritual nature of man, but the Bible has a place in Christian history and

influence which is *sui generis*. Its appeal is to the religious element in man, and so long as man is in need of spiritual guidance and moral stimulus the Bible will hold its place as a supreme chart and charter of the spirit.

The Unitarian approach to the Bible has been largely determined by modern knowledge. Yet before the advent of the modern disciplines and methods of study, Unitarians were distinguished by the application of reason to biblical interpretation. For them reason has long been the criterion by which the Bible itself must be judged. "Any doctrine that plainly appears to be absurd and contradictory ought to be rejected", wrote Stephen Nye, a seventeenth-century clergyman and forerunner of modern Unitarianism. Forty years before Benjamin Jowett, in "Essays and Reviews", pleaded that the Bible should "be interpreted like any other book, by the same rules of evidence and the same canons of criticism", the Unitarian, Thomas Belsham (1750-1829), had rejected the history of the creation in Genesis as incredible, and begged "the humble and sincere inquirer after truth" to sit down and "read the Scriptures with the same thirst after knowledge, and with the same liberal and candid spirit, with which he would read any other ancient volume". Later, in the nineteenth century, Unitarians in general repudiated the view that the Bible was the supreme court of appeal in religious matters, and arrived at the conclusion that the highest authority in religion was to be found "in reason, conscience, and the heart of men" (J. E. Carpenter: "James Martineau. A Study". P. 587: n. 1). The "inspiration" of the Bible was seen to consist not in some authoritative and dogmatically defined body of Scripture, but in those writings, in those events and utterances which illustrated man's eternal quest for God and God's revelation of Himself in man and which discovered in the conscience and reason of man a responsive echo and assent.

It will thus be seen that Unitarians open the Bible unfettered by any idea of its infallibility. The underlying theme of the Bible is God, but Unitarians do not therefore regard it as "the inspired record of a unique revelation" which orthodox Christianity still asserts it to be (*vide* "Doctrine in the Church of England". The Report of the Archbishops' Commission. P. 28). Rather is it for them a book of religious

history and poetry, containing a philosophy of history and a philosophy of religion, not to be accepted uncritically or as a whole, but to be weighed and valued in accordance with its truth and agreement with human reason and experience. Thus considered, as an anthology of religious writings, some of which are spiritually of a higher quality than others,¹ the Bible is not in danger of being treated with that irrational deference or credulous bibliolatry which marked earlier times and is still patent in fundamentalist quarters to-day. All the work of chroniclers, poets, prophets, priests, scribes and editors is not capable of being compressed into a closed and artificial system or unity simply because it lies within the two covers of the Bible.² To attempt to harmonize the Bible with itself or to level up the Old Testament towards the New is a procedure based upon a false view of the nature of Scripture. Any such attempt becomes unnecessary when the rightful place of the Bible in the literature of faith is realized and acknowledged.

Unitarians hold that the Bible belongs to the literature of faith. That is, it is not and cannot be a guide in matters of science or politics, or even, altogether, in morals. (There are

¹ It is impossible to ignore the difference of spiritual and ethical level which exist in the Bible, affording, amongst other things, a vivid illustration of the contrast between a tribal and a universalistic religion. Contrast, for example:

1. The treatment of enemies by Samuel who "hewed Agag [the Amalekite king] in pieces before the Lord" (I Samuel. C. 15: v. 33), and by Oded and others who sent back their captives, clothed and fed, in peace "and carried all the feeble of them upon asses" (II Chronicles. C. 28—a remarkable story of humane behaviour).

2. The way in which children are regarded: Psalm 137 pronounces a blessing on child-murderers, whilst Jesus "called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them".

3. The prosaic Hebrew genealogies and laws with the poetry and inspiration of the Psalms and Job and the prophecies of the Second Isaiah.

4. The book of Esther, with its story of a terrible vengeance (Chapter 9) and the Sermon on the Mount.

5. The folk-tales of Judges and the parables of Jesus.

² In some respects, it would seem to be merely an accident of history that the Old and New Testaments contain some books and not others. For example, the Song of Songs, a Hebrew Love-lyric, was included in the O.T. Canon because attributed to Solomon, whilst Ecclesiasticus, a book of mature reflections on life and full of wisdom, was not included; Ecclesiastes, a sceptical and pessimistic treatise whose author is the Omar Khayyam of the Old Testament, was included, whilst the Wisdom of Solomon, a masterpiece of early religious philosophy, was not. Similarly, the comparatively unimportant letter of Paul to Philemon has been preserved for us in the New Testament, whilst other letters and presumably other Gospels (cf. Luke. C. 1: v. 1) have been lost.

some moral problems never envisaged in the Bible: problems of compromise, committing the lesser evil, conscientious objection to war.) Essentially it is a manual of devotion, a companion-guide to the spiritual life. In this sphere, the Bible is still supremely relevant to our age, as a fount and source of religious inspiration, as reflecting age-old human needs, and providing a clue to the nature and purpose of God.

There is an impressive and amazing timelessness about the Bible when it deals with the spiritual life of man. True, there are incompatibilities between the world of the Bible and the world of the twentieth century. The Hebrew view of the physical world was very different from ours. Miracle was an accepted means of divine revelation. The idea of the reign of natural law is of recent date. In the Bible we find a world in which the sun stands still (Joshua. C. 10: vv. 12-13), an axe will swim (II Kings. C. 6: vv. 5-6), dead men are resurrected, demons are the cause of sickness and insanity (cf. the Gospels). Modern science has shown us the naïvety of such conceptions. But these, after all, are surface matters, and do not affect the spiritual teaching of the Bible. Because Shakespeare introduces witches and fairies into his dramas, we do not therefore despise his knowledge of human character and motives. Whilst men's ways of looking at Nature are continually changing, their fundamental spiritual experiences remain the same. In this realm, at least, the Bible still holds its own. Poetry and prophecy, personality and deed still speak to "all sorts and conditions of men". The value of the Bible, its true and spiritual significance, lies in its power of awaking religious feeling, of strengthening and uplifting heart and mind, and of challenging the will of man to noble living.

That the Divine Spirit is revealed in the Bible has already been indicated, but it may be worth while to state here the Unitarian view of revelation, since it differs from that held by many orthodox Christians. According to the latter, God makes Himself known to man by special acts of self-revelation at different points in history: the Bible, and especially the life and personality of Jesus, being the witness to such revelation. On the other hand, the Unitarian holds that revelation, by which he understands the discovery and recognition by man of divine truth, is progressive and universal. The knowledge of God

to be found in the Bible is contained in the whole long record of the evolution of religion from primitive cult and materialistic worship, upwards through the history of Israel and the glowing utterances of the prophets, to the pages of the New Testament which culminate in the worship that is "in spirit and in truth". The idea of God, at first crude and tribal, is refined, moralized and universalized, till in the teaching of Jesus we reach a conception of the Supreme Being that has never been surpassed. What we have in the Bible is a gradual discovery of God, yet God is only partially revealed. There is a Divine reticence, necessary for the fulfilment of His purpose in and by man. Just as the Gospels are not biographies of Jesus and are not of equal value throughout, nevertheless we have the impression of a great and genuine personality, so the Bible as a whole includes passages of no real relevance to the major theme of God (indeed, some obscure and detract from the presentation of that theme), yet we are certain in the main of the character of God.

The Bible's relevance to our day and generation, however, is not confined to its value as a clue to the nature of God and the workings of His Spirit. It also speaks to man's social condition and needs. It has words to say that are pertinent to our national and international life. That righteousness alone exalteth a nation, that the destiny of a people is ultimately dependent upon its relationship to God, that love and service and forgiveness are essential to society—are indeed "laws of life": these are some of the lessons the Bible teaches, both by precept and example. For instance, the triumph of spiritual forces over material power is illustrated by the history of Israel, a tiny people surviving conquest and deportation by Assyria and Babylon, through their hold on "the things that are unseen", and by the life and teaching of Jesus, the Crucified "overcoming the world".

Without doubt, the value of the Bible is considerably enhanced and its relevance and topical character made more clear when it is realized that its contents reflect crises of individual and national life. The Hebrew prophetic tradition claimed that God was a God of justice. But in 586 B.C. the Babylonians, filled with a vision of Empire not unlike some nations of the present day, destroyed Jerusalem and deported most of the people. Those who had tried to obey God's will suffered along

with those who had been faithless. Men asked themselves where the justice of God lay in guilty and innocent suffering alike. Ezekiel and the Second Isaiah both had their answers. They accepted the destruction of the political institutions with which they were familiar and looked to a new and better world. The vision of the valley of dry bones seen by Ezekiel and the superb poems that deal with the problem of suffering in Isaiah (the so-called "Servant" passages in Isaiah. C. 42: vv. 1-4. C. 49: vv. 1-6. C. 50: vv. 4-9. C. 52: v. 13 to C. 53: v. 12) are the sixth-century prophets' reply to the problems that confronted them. These problems are still with us now, and demand a solution. The heroic faith which enabled these men to face and overcome their difficulties and disasters has something very significant to teach us to-day. Fully to understand and appreciate the Bible it must be brought into relationship with present events and trends in civilization. Here, undoubtedly, the old book judges us new men and our new world, and convicts us of selfishness, greed and unworthy ambitions.

For Unitarians the "Word of God" is not confined to the pages of "Holy Scripture". He may find this "Word" in any book or thought or deed which elevates the heart and mind, directs them Godward, and guides men's feet into ways of true joy and peace. In the words of Hartley Coleridge's hymn, he asks:

"In sacred books we read how God doth speak
To holy men in many different ways;
But hath the present age no God to seek?
Or is God silent in these latter days?"

The Bible may not for him be the sole source of divine revelation or the last "Word of God" to our generation. He may find inspiration in other sacred literatures and in writings not considered sacred.¹ But what it has to say about God and man, about the highest human aspirations, about loyalty and courage, self-sacrifice and service, mercy and forgiveness, faith, hope and

¹ In Hindu Upanishad or Buddhist Dhamma-pada, in Wordsworth's lines on "Tintern Abbey Re-visited" or T. S. Eliot's "The Rock". Most Unitarian ministers are in the habit of reading from, and most Unitarian congregations of listening to, an extended lectionary. This may include orthodox and unorthodox Christian teachers of all centuries as well as suitable passages from other writings not professedly religious but containing some vital, significant and inspired truth.

love, makes it supremely relevant to our times. The Unitarian draws upon its spiritual riches with a reverent and a grateful heart, finding therein continual inspiration for work and worship and an ever-deepening sense of the Universal Spirit of God.¹

¹ An illustration of the Unitarian attitude towards the Bible will be found in "A Golden Treasury of the Bible", Selected and Edited by Mortimer Rowe, B.A. The Lindsey Press, 1934. This is a selection of readings from the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament, which aims at presenting "in shorter compass and in attractive form what is best and most enduring in the religious literature" of Old and New Testaments. As far as possible the books of the Bible are re-arranged in their chronological order, and where ancient versions or modern scholarship make possible an improvement in translation, the text is altered accordingly. The Pauline Epistles are given in a modern translation. (Modern versions of the Bible, like Weymouth, Goodspeed, and Moffatt, often give a more accurate and intelligible rendering than either Authorized or Revised Versions.)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS

I. JESUS IN HISTORY AND IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

The place assigned to Jesus in the faith and worship of the Churches known as Unitarian or Free Christian varies very widely. Prayer is no longer offered "through Jesus Christ", but Jesus is revered as a spiritual force and as a prophet whose teaching contains revelations of abiding value about the nature of God and man. Unitarianism has its roots in Christian history and inspiration, and most Unitarians regard themselves as members of the Christian Church, even though often excluded from co-operation with their fellow-Christians.

We distinguish between the historic Jesus and the theological Christ as later Christian experience came to conceive of him. The original conception of Jesus as the Messiah or Christ is intelligible only in the particular mental climate of a certain time and place. Very soon in Christian history this was transformed and given a wider and eternal significance. Later still, this developed into the conception of Christ not merely as Son of God, but as God Himself. The early stages of the growth of this belief can be seen in the New Testament itself.

2. THE HISTORIC JESUS

Nineteenth-century religious liberalism read back into the records of the life of Jesus the idea of a modern ethical teacher whose life was not miraculous, but who taught with a unique divine authority and whose teaching was final and infallible. In the twentieth century two schools of New Testament critics, first the eschatologists and then the form-critics, have disclosed fundamental objections to this view. The eschatologists maintain that Jesus expected the Kingdom of God to come into existence not as the consummation of centuries of human striving, but very soon by a supernatural transformation of the existing world order. Form-critics have laid down principles of criticism which if wholly accepted would make it

almost impossible to discover how far any particular act or saying attributed to Jesus is really historical.

We consider that this excessive scepticism overlooks some important considerations. While we recognize, therefore, that the Gospels were not composed as historical biographies, but as part of the mission preaching, we do regard them as sources of high value from which we can obtain knowledge of the message and activities of the historic Jesus.

3. THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC

(a) Critical Re-statement of the Liberal Religious Tradition

The old liberal religious tradition of the supreme value of the ethic and teaching of Jesus is not destroyed by recognizing the limitations brought to light by modern study. It is significant that the Church preserved much of the ethical teaching of Jesus in spite of the fact that Jesus was regarded primarily as a supernatural redeemer. Jesus stands in the line of the prophetic tradition. He does not impose a new code, but demands repentance, a change of heart and mind and a spirit of love to be applied to all life's problems.

(b) The Permanent Value of the Christian Ethic

The moral teaching of Jesus was not merely "interimsethik"—that is, ethics valid only for the intermediate period before the coming of the Kingdom. The acceptance of the eschatological theory does not lead necessarily to this conclusion. And even if the conclusion were reached that the moral teaching had the coming of the Kingdom in view, this does not imply that the teaching would lose its value for to-day. In the new order itself, indeed, certain problems—for instance, those of the State and of sex—would disappear, but the principles of conduct demanded from those fit to enter into the coming Kingdom remain valid, even though the Kingdom was not to come in the way Jesus and his first followers expected. The Christian ethic is rooted in love for God and love to one's neighbour, and as such has a universal validity for all time.

4. WAS JESUS PERFECT MAN?

Unitarians have found great moral stimulus in the thought of Jesus as perfect man, and have often argued that since one man lived the perfect life, it was possible for all men so to live. Psychological

and philosophical considerations have altered our idea of perfection as applied to human character. In the absolute sense perfection implies such an utter fullness, completeness and richness of being as to transcend the utmost possibilities of finite humanity. Supreme moral greatness should not be equated with absolute moral perfection. Jesus had intellectual limitations and moments of weakness and even of despair; without such experiences he could not have been fully and truly human. The idea of perfection in human character is to be regarded as relative, not absolute—relative to time and opportunity.

5. THE PERSONALITY OF JESUS

The records reveal a powerful personality of great mental and spiritual calibre, not only a spiritual genius and prophet, but also a poet, a sublime figure with a magnificent vision of life for the children of God.

6. A NEW CHRISTOLOGY

The orthodox presentation of the eternal Christ is false because dualistic. It makes the incarnation a supreme miracle at one point in history, instead of a possibility in all ages and with all men. If Jesus was "God manifest in the flesh" it was not exclusively, not because he was other than man, but because in him the divine Light, dimmed in the vast majority by narrowness and egoism, shone brightly through. Our modern Christology is far more nearly allied to our experience of Jesus as "the great friend to all the sons of men". In a forbidding world men seek a comrade who is at once human and divinely illumined. According to their needs, men behold Jesus, and endow the teacher of Nazareth with the capacity for meeting modern emergencies, accepting him for what he was for every age, a true friend, because he saw the image of God in every human face, and inspired with new hope even the most sinful and friendless in his own age—the woman taken in adultery, and the hated agent of the foreign ruler, the tax-collector Zacchaeus. And so, while the light which Jesus showed to the world can no longer be seen as the one and only beam from the divine treasury of light, its gleam is accepted with gladness, because it is truly "a breath of the power of God, and a clear effluence of the glory of the Almighty".

I. JESUS IN HISTORY AND IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

THE Churches of the Free Religious Faith have generally been known in English-speaking countries as Unitarian, because freedom from credal subscription eventually led to the rejection of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. The name Unitarian is sometimes accepted and sometimes rejected, but the fact that their members as a whole agree in rejecting this doctrine is never in dispute. The place assigned to Jesus Christ, however, in the faith and worship of these Churches varies very widely. It is generally accepted that worship and prayer are offered to God as Father only, and while until the middle of the nineteenth century it might be quite common for a Unitarian to offer prayer "through Jesus Christ, our Lord", the modern mind has more and more rejected the need for any mediation of prayer or worship through Christ. On the other hand, the conviction that the life of Jesus was a revelation of the nature and love of God, a revelation with far more than a temporary validity or importance, has been so strong in these Churches, that the nature of God is very closely associated with the teaching and life of Jesus, and Jesus, though no longer called "Lord" (a title for which he expressed no desire), is revered as a spiritual force and as a prophet whose teaching contains revelations of abiding value about the nature of man and God. Hence the eagerness which Unitarians have shown in defending their right to be regarded as a branch of the Christian Church, and the stress they have laid in social work on the importance of Christian ethics.

Until the revolution in thought begun by James Martineau in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the literal acceptance of all that the New Testament contained was general. The stories of the Virgin Birth, Miracles, Transfiguration, Resurrection and Ascension were generally believed as they stood. Jesus was thus undoubtedly "the Christ", the unique revealer of the will of God to men. Thus, Rev. Philip Harwood asserted in 1837: "We cannot, so long as we are Christians, reject any doctrine which we believe to have been taught by Christ."

Until the middle of the century, in fact, the term "Christ" could be used synonymously with the term "Jesus", for there

was no general dispute that Jesus claimed to be, and deserved recognition as, the Jewish Messiah, and that his teaching came into the world of men with a divine sanction immeasurably greater than the sanction of previous prophets or later saints and doctors. When Martineau came to the conclusion that Jesus did not regard himself as Messiah, his views aroused considerable opposition amongst Unitarians. By the end of the century, however, it had become clear that a distinction must be drawn between Jesus of Nazareth as New Testament history revealed him—a human figure, however mightily God-inspired—and "Christ" as the subsequent thought and experience of his followers in the Christian Church had come to conceive of him. The Gospels, indeed, draw a picture of "Jesus-Christ" because their writers were already steeped in the tradition of Christ-preaching exemplified so markedly in the Epistles of St. Paul. Christology, however, has to be examined as a development arising from religious experience that is beyond the analysis of the life of Jesus in Palestine.

Since Jesus is not worshipped as God in the Churches of the Free Faith, newcomers sometimes ask the question, "What, then, do you say of Jesus: Was he the Messiah or Christ?" This is to ask a question to which a straight answer cannot be given. The Hebrew word "Messiah" and the Greek word "Christos" ("Christ") originally had the same meaning of anointed. In Jewish thought "the Messiah" was the destined liberator of Israel. Some of the prophets had pictured this expected figure in one form, some in another. Some looked mainly for a bringer of material benefits, while others looked for spiritual powers from the promised deliverer. The idea could also be applied to the "remnant" by which society is saved, rather than to an individual hero. Thus the term "Messiah" stands for an idea, or a number of ideas, in the popular mind, and not necessarily for a single eternal idea in the mind and intention of God, an idea to be fulfilled in the history of a single personality. Jesus may have conceived of himself as the promised Messiah, fulfilling the age-long hope of the coming Redeemer in the only way that it could be fulfilled by him—namely, in terms of the suffering Servant prophecies of the Second Isaiah. But this hardly enables us to give the unqualified reply "Then he was the Messiah". If the popular

expectation was to be so falsified (for the nation did not want a Messiah who should be the suffering servant of their race), it is better to say that the expectation was false, and that God had not intended Zion to be redeemed by a popular hero.

The original conception of Jesus as the Messiah or Christ is only intelligible in the particular mental climate of a certain time and place. Very soon in Christian history this was transformed and given a wider and eternal significance. There is, indeed, no single uniform interpretation of the significance of Jesus held substantially by all New Testament writers and forming the essential message or preaching of the early Church. In the course of time the conception of Christ as Son of God was developed into the conception of Christ as God the Son, culminating in the Nicene doctrine of Christ as "Very God of very God". The early stages of growth of this belief can be seen in the New Testament itself. We distinguish between the human Jesus and the theological Christ as later Christian experience came to conceive of him. How does the modern study of the Gospels affect our understanding of the life and work of the historical Jesus and the claim that this life and work have a unique, eternal and cosmic significance over and above the normal significance of a human life?

2. THE HISTORIC JESUS

Nineteenth-century religious liberalism—a phase of Christian doctrine now somewhat in disfavour among theologians—sought to find in Jesus of Nazareth a prophet who claimed to be no more than a great and God-inspired teacher, yet a teacher whose teaching was final and infallible, a teacher who had the words of eternal life—words which, if obeyed, would guarantee the emergence upon earth, through the process of history, of a true Kingdom of God. Unitarianism has long reflected this attitude, which would certainly be the easiest approach for a rationalistic Christianity which accepts no miracles, and yet desires a personal and social ethic with some kind of divine authentication. To find in Jesus the world's supreme guide, a man who was never mistaken as to the nature of things, or the nature of history—this is a comforting solution for the modern world's religious problem, though ultimately it involves a spiritual and ethical authoritarianism.

In the twentieth century two schools of New Testament critics, first the eschatologists and then the form-critics, have disclosed fundamental problems that were but faintly perceived during the process of nineteenth-century interpretation. The eschatological school began in the nineteenth century with the contribution of Johannes Weiss, who showed the great emphasis in the teaching of Jesus on the imminent coming of "the Kingdom of God" as a sudden event.

A clue to the understanding of Mark's Gospel was found in the idea of the "secret Messiahship". Jesus was conscious of his function as Messiah to bring in this kingdom by his death, but he kept this a secret from the people and, till the Transfiguration, even as a secret from his disciples.

In 1901 Albert Schweitzer formulated a thoroughgoing eschatological interpretation in his study of "The Mystery of the Kingdom of God". He contended that the clear distinction between the present order and the new order to come, the "now" and the "then", runs through the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and the parables, just as it runs through the account of the Passion. The "Kingdom of God" was not an open message at all, but a secret disclosed to the disciples only. The Kingdom was not a "far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves", but an event "very nigh unto you", an event to take place in the twinkling of an eye when the hour should be ripe. This view of the Kingdom as an event rather than as a process is fundamental to the theory. The Kingdom implied the full and sudden inauguration of the Messianic Age, when the sheep would be divided from the goats, and only those who had repented would be sure of entrance. Accordingly there was a great urgency about the preaching of Jesus. The Kingdom would arrive when a small band of followers in the Jewish nation, acting as leaven, were consecrated for the new way of life. It would mean the sudden and complete leavening of all society, a total transformation of human values. Henceforth the world of men would live by divine values, for the dead would have been raised, and all would then be "as angels in heaven", with no marriage or giving in marriage. Thus, some of our most pressing moral problems (those of sex and of the State) would cease to exist. According to this theory, then, the ethic Jesus enunciated was "*interimsethik*"—that is to

say, a special system of behaviour devised to inaugurate the expected Kingdom, and not a system whose values were permanent. Once the sudden transformation had taken place, a new ethic would be the order of the day. An eschatological interpretation has been given to almost every parable, saying and journey of Jesus. It gave fresh illumination to many of these. Those who do not accept it regard the theory as working a single idea to exhaustion, and point out that it depends almost entirely on accepting the integrity of the Gospel according to Mark as a fundamental unity, conveying in the main an accurate account of the movements and actions of Jesus. The eschatological element in the teaching of Jesus has certainly to be reckoned with, whether the thoroughgoing conclusions of the Schweitzer school are accepted or not.

The form-critics argue that the teaching of Jesus must have been transmitted in forms adapted to the catechetical and homiletic needs of the early Church. It goes back to disconnected fragments of material which have been worked up into the familiar, though decidedly sketchy, story which the Gospels together present. Moreover, the Gospel records contain not the full teaching of Jesus, but only summaries of it, made under the pressing necessities of catechesis and apologetics. Dibelius, Bultmann and other form-critics affirm that the setting of the Gospel narratives is artificial, that they are not historical but religious documents, representing what Jesus was for the faith and piety of the early Church. They consider that the material has been treated so tendentiously that no sound core is left. Even the parables have been subjected to this process.

The importance of this school of criticism is that it has helped us to realize that some of the teachings found in the Synoptic Gospels reflect situations which were not actually those in which Jesus was speaking. This has long been suspected to be the case with the Fourth Gospel. Many sayings reflect the persecutions of the early Church, and bear reference to its order and discipline. Thus form-criticism, along with much subsequent criticism, has at any rate produced considerable uncertainty as to how far the records of any particular saying or act of Jesus can be trusted. The "Christ-Myth" school, represented by Arthur Drews and J. M. Robertson, has indeed been very adequately answered, and there is virtually no doubt

to-day that Jesus of Nazareth was a highly significant historical figure in Palestine in the days of the Herods and Pilate. But to know clearly what he did and what he taught is felt by many to be impossible.

Some typical statements of the conclusions resulting from the complete acceptance of the position taken up by the form-critics may be given as illustration. The Catholic scholar L. de Grandmaison (in his "Life of Jesus") writes of the early material collected in the records as follows: "It in fact represents a doctrinal stage clearly earlier than the dogmatic developments which were certainly realized in the course of the years A.D. 50-60. In that way it is primitive and different to the doctrine which was common to the Church when the works in which it is expressed were drawn up; different not by contradiction but in that it is incomplete, ambiguous and implicit." A distinction is here clearly drawn between the early material—namely, the primitive records—and the works—namely, the Gospels—in which the material was finally drawn up. Stated by a Catholic, that is more or less the agreed standard of historical judgment for any inquiry into the life of Jesus. Those nearest to the life of Jesus did not make a complete or infallible record of his life; it was left to the Church, under a prevailing belief, in a later period which Grandmaison puts at A.D. 50-60, to draw up the final account. Bultmann goes so far as to say, "We can no longer know the character of Jesus, his life, or his personality . . . there is not one of his words which we can regard as purely authentic". Professor R. H. Lightfoot, also, in his Bampton Lectures (1934) on "History and Interpretation in the Gospels", maintains that Mark's Gospel is in its own way as much a theological construction as the Fourth Gospel. Mark was no biographer of Jesus, but intended to produce what his title indicates: "The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark. C. 1: v. 1). The work contains history, but history already veiled in a "luminous haze" of theological supposition.

We consider that this excessive scepticism overlooks some important considerations. That the process of re-interpretation has gone far may be admitted, but not that it was so complete as is represented. A comparison of the three accounts of the Baptism in the first three Gospels is very illuminating. In Mark's account Jesus saw the Spirit as a dove descending upon

him and Jesus heard the voice, "Thou art my beloved Son"—in other words, the experience was the experience of Jesus only. In the two other Gospels the experience is made in part a public experience and a public witnessing to the function of Jesus. But in each Gospel only one-half of the account is altered and that a different half, so that the process can be seen at work. Matthew's Gospel leaves the vision of the dove as a subjective experience but alters "Thou art my beloved Son" into "This is my beloved Son". Luke's Gospel leaves the hearing of the voice as a subjective experience but makes the dove descend in bodily form upon Jesus. But in spite of these changes, Mark's account is left unaltered.

Even more significant is a comparison of the different accounts in the first three Gospels of the Last Supper. Though the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians had reported Jesus as saying, "This do in remembrance of me", this command to repeat the Sacrament is not given either in Mark's Gospel or Matthew's Gospel. In Luke's Gospel it is applied only to the bread but not to the cup. If the Gospels merely reflect early Christian teaching and practice, this retention of older accounts becomes completely unintelligible.

Further, there are a number of passages in the Gospels which, so far from reflecting the beliefs of the first Christians, must have been of considerable difficulty to them. Schmiedel and Neumann have on this account called them "foundation pillars". There are at least seven such passages. One of them is the saying, "Why callest thou me good?" (Mark. C. 10: v. 18), which Matthew has modified to "Why askest thou me concerning that which is good?" (Matthew. C. 19: v. 17) in accordance with his particular theological tendency.

While we recognize, therefore, that the Gospels were not composed as historical biographies but as part of the mission preaching, we do regard them as sources of high value from which we can obtain knowledge of the message and activities of the historic Jesus.

This conclusion is strengthened if, in opposition to the form-critics, but in agreement with scholars like T. W. Manson and C. H. Dodd, we accept the substantial integrity of the Marcan account. And if the eschatological interpretation be accepted as described in a Note appended to this Paper, the eschatology

of the Gospels is accepted as being historically the eschatology of Jesus himself.

Further, it is significant that Bultmann himself, though stating that we can "no longer know" the personality or words of Jesus, has, in "Jesus and the Word" produced a very definite reconstruction of his message. The attempt to achieve a historical reconstruction is constantly being made, for the interpretation of the life and message of Jesus cannot be avoided, even though the basis for such an interpretation may be considered inadequate. If some scholars believe that the "summaries" that remain to us of the words of Jesus are one-sided and distorted, it can also be claimed that this is not necessarily a fatal handicap for our research. Just as the summary of a modern preacher's "collected sermons and essays" may accurately survey and reveal the essence of his whole message, so the Gospel record may have blurred, but not falsified, the message of Jesus to his own age, despite the tendency-writing to which it has been subjected. In spite of uncertainties, the Churches of the Free Faith hold to the view that Jesus gave to the world a message of supreme importance, which is based on principles which still demand adequate expression in the social and individual life of man.

3. THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC

(a) *Critical Re-statement of the Free Religious Tradition*

Modern Christianity certainly demands agreement as to the ethic that Jesus enunciated. The ecumenical movement throughout the Christian Churches of the world is gathering strength on the basis of the practical application of a Christian ethic to the problems of society, and of a joint concern to discover the implications of this ethic for the co-operative action of all branches of Christendom.

The free religious view that the moral teaching of Jesus is of supreme value is not rendered obsolete by recognizing the limitations imposed by modern study. There is a solid body of authentic moral teaching in the Gospels. Indeed, this part of the Gospel tradition is least likely to have been distorted, for the very reason that it was not very prominent in the thought and teaching of the primitive Church. We may even go so far

as to say that the fact that the collection of sayings which critics have labelled "Q" was ever composed shows how firmly the historical fact that Jesus taught as a prophet was embedded in the tradition. No doubt there were accretions, ascribing to Jesus current proverbs, or making him sanction the precepts which were later found desirable for Church discipline (e.g., Matthew. C. 5: v. 18). In the main, however, the moral teaching gives the impression of issuing from a single religious leader. Its value is not even lessened by pointing out that it has "all been said before" by previous teachers, for it had certainly never been said before as a whole, or embodied in such a striking missionary life as that which Jesus lived. That the impression of its origin in a single mind is correct seems to be confirmed by the improbability that the Church would have represented Jesus as devoting so much of his teaching to a development of Jewish religious ethics, if he had not in fact done so. The Fourth Gospel and the Apocryphal Gospels show the sort of teaching that his followers were apt to ascribe to him when they were using their own inventive powers.

Though Jesus is represented as accepting the title of Rabbi, and as teaching in that capacity, he differs from the scribes of his day in speaking as a prophet as well as an exponent of the Law. He discriminates. He does not believe that duty is merely a matter of knowing and applying the appropriate scripture rule for the occasion. Other Rabbis have parallel sayings about what is the chief commandment, but they never dream of allowing that commandment to release men from the obligations of obeying every other rule. Jesus brings out into the open the conflict of written rules, and instead of insisting that both must somehow be reconciled, he boldly throws the choice on the insight of the individual. "Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good or to do harm? to save a life or to kill?" The Scripture rules do but point the way, and remind men of standing claims; the responsibility for doing their duty in the actual situation lies with them. In particular, Jesus stands in the true prophetic line when he denies any real moral value to the cultus regulations of the Old Testament. "There is nothing from without the man that, going into him, can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man."

The key-word to Jesus' doctrine of duty is Love, formulated in the two great commandments, to love God heart and soul, and to love your neighbour as yourself. It is plain from the whole tenor of his teaching that by setting love of God first, he was not returning to the Pharisaic emphasis on the cultus, or demanding the adoption of some mystical discipline. His God is the God of the Hebrew prophets, one who desires mercy and not sacrifices. Those who love Him, and are determined above all to carry out His will, have only to ask what is this will to see that in all human affairs it is that we shall love others as ourselves, and give to their claims the same priority that we are by nature inclined to give to our own. But to recognize that the love of God issues in works of mercy rather than in ritual is not to deprive it of all meaning. It does make a difference, in fact all the difference, when we see behind the system of claims and duties, the holy will of a God who Himself is Love.

In discussing the teaching of Jesus on ethics, it must not be forgotten that his emphasis must have been to a certain extent coloured by the circumstances of his time. There had been Messianic revolts, a repetition of which he had no desire to stimulate. His teaching should not be regarded as a mere collection of isolated precepts or separate rules of conduct. It does not constitute a new "law" after the fashion of the old (as Tolstoy's emphasis, for example, on the five "new commandments" of the Sermon on the Mount implies). The call of Jesus was for "repentance"—a change of heart and mind, finding expression in the surrender of the self to God, the love of God in heart and soul which issues in our loving others as ourselves. Love is the principle of the new life. The precepts of Jesus are illustrations of what love means in practice. These illustrations are not rules which mechanically determine every particular case. The injunction traditionally rendered "resist not evil", for instance, does not of itself decide whether and to what extent coercion is legitimate. Taken in its context, it is rather to be regarded as an emphatic repudiation of the principle of revenge. Jesus does very definitely call for a new attitude in the meeting of evil.¹

¹ The text (Matthew. C. 5: v. 39) is variously rendered. R.V. has "resist not him that is evil" but gives the marginal rendering, agreeing with A.V., "resist not evil". Moffatt translates: "You are not to resist an injury". (Vulg. "non resistere malo".)

In the light of this teaching the ultimate responsibility for every choice rests with the individual, but the aim and spirit by which the individual must be actuated are abundantly clear.

(b) *The Permanent Value of the Christian Ethic*

According to thoroughgoing eschatological criticism, the whole of the ethical teaching of Jesus is interpreted as an immediate preparation for the inauguration of the miraculous Kingdom of God, by the power of God from on high. The value of the eschatological argument may be recognized without accepting its "interimsethik" conclusion. But the theory explains why there is no long-term programme in the teaching, because the Kingdom is expected almost immediately. It can be held to explain such commands as "Sell all that thou hast . . .", because, the time being short, the possession of property is a hindrance rather than an asset (but then, in the Kingdom, the elect will have all these things added unto them). It may be broadly true that Jesus tended to ignore the claims of society in his teaching, because he thought society was about to disappear in the New Realm, but the eschatological theory cannot explain away his insistence, already noticed, that the individual must decide for himself what is right. If the imminence of the end of the age could be held by Jesus to justify the ignoring of some claims, why does it not justify the ignoring of all ethical claims? Why is goodness good during a brief interim period, and not good in itself? We may surely say that if Jesus did expect the end of the age within a few months or weeks, it obviously made some difference to his view of the relative urgency of different claims. Certain duties, like being reconciled to one's enemies, would become very urgent, while long-term planning would become quite futile (taking thought for "the morrow"). It may well be true that the expectation of the imminent end coloured the moral teaching which Jesus enunciated, but did not condition its essential outlines. What made goodness good was that it promoted blessedness in individual and social relationships now, as well as making it possible for the good to enter into the blessedness of the Messianic Age. The attitude of Jesus to society is not negative.

The possibility that Jesus preached with a view to what we might call an "emergency period" does not invalidate such an ethic for application to life here and now. The teaching of sincere love of God and sincere love to one's neighbour remains vital for any world in which men and women are children of God. It must have a universal validity for any form of human life. This, after all, is all that Free Christians have demanded of a system of Christian ethics. Problems change from age to age, but the solution to every problem can be found in the light of divine and human love. No solution is easy, and no answer to a moral question is ready-made; only the direction in which it is to be found is clearly indicated.

4. WAS JESUS PERFECT MAN?

Many Unitarians have found a strong moral stimulus in the idea of the human perfection of Jesus. Rejecting the doctrine that he was "perfect God", but continuing to claim that Jesus was "divine", though in no exclusive sense, for all human beings are "sons of God", Unitarians have loved to look upon Jesus as the perfect man, the pattern for every age. The ultimate aim of moral striving has been to attain "the measure of the fullness of the stature of Christ". The way home for a world disillusioned by the age-old folly and sinfulness of humanity has been found in one historical person of whom it could be said "he was without sin, though tempted like as we are". If pessimists said that humanity must always err, the Unitarian could at once reply, "No, your impossible standard has been reached. Jesus of Nazareth lived the perfect human life." Orthodox Christians might affirm this too, but they could not add, as the Unitarian did, "and because it was possible for one such man to live the perfect life, it is also possible for his disciples".¹

¹ Orthodoxy attempts to gain the advantages of a purely human Jesus through the doctrine of "kenosis" ("emptying", Phil. C. 2: v. 6), which states that on becoming man, the pre-existent Christ divested himself of all his divine attributes for the time being, to resume them after his resurrection and ascension. But this theory fails to take into account the psychology of thought, and the process of knowing. The difficulty may be stated as follows. If Jesus on assuming human flesh had put off all the attributes of deity, then he did not know that he was God at any single moment of his life on earth. If so, he could not have

What is the bearing of modern criticism upon such claims? Can we continue to believe in the "sinlessness" or "perfection" of Jesus, or is such a notion undermined by critical inquiry? The question must be faced with complete candour. But it must also be realized that psychological and philosophical considerations have altered our idea of "perfection" as applied to human character. In the absolute sense, perfection implies such an utter fullness, completeness and richness of being as to transcend the utmost possibilities of finite personality. As applied to human personality the question is this: how far can "perfection" be realized in us? Human life implies limitations at every point, but we recognize that religious development is a process of overcoming limitations through coming into ever closer contact with the Divine Love which gave us life, and which heightens our mental and moral powers. Yet supreme moral greatness cannot be equated with absolute moral "perfection". In any case we can never have any final proof that perfection has been achieved by the human spirit in the sphere of earthly life.

It is clear that, like all human beings, Jesus had intellectual limitations. Even the evangelists admit that he "knew not the day nor the hour". He had moments of weakness (as when in Gethsemane he shrank from the cup that he must drink), and seemingly he had moments of despair ("Why hast thou forsaken me?"). Without such things his experience could not be fully and truly human. But the outstanding fact is the extent to which he overcame the limitations of the self-centred life. "Thy will be done" was the key-note of his life; and what it implied was no mere passive resignation, but an active identification with the will of God.

The intellectual limitations to which Jesus was subject were

taught that he was God, and any passages which orthodox theologians believe indicate that he was God must have been wrongly interpreted. On the other hand, if the theory is modified so as to imply that he had put off every other attribute of deity, but still knew that he was God, our first difficulty has returned. For now we have a Jesus who is human as far as his capacities and will are concerned, but who knows that he has a special relationship to the Divine Father, not shared by other human beings. This knowledge is enough to put quite a different face upon all his temptations and trials from that which is presented to us in our temptations and trials. If he knew that he had come from God, and would go back to God, he would be in a stronger and more favoured mental position than other men in time of temptation or fear.

the necessary outcome of his participation in the life of his time. He appears to have held a mistaken conception of the advent of the Kingdom of God. That was in any case only incidental. His essential message far transcended such things. "The subject of all Jesus' preaching", declares A. Schweitzer in "My Life and Thought", "is love; and more generally the preparation of the heart for the Kingdom." His preaching was clearly the reflection of his own inner state.

Human perfection, in whatsoever degree it may be attained, is a matter of growth. Spiritual growth implies inner struggle, and the experience of failure. Realizing this, we know that the Jesus who points the way for us to Divine goodness cannot have been unfailingly "sinless" throughout his whole life. He refused the title "good", and he accepted the baptism of John, which was a baptism to repentance. Though repentance means a change of outlook, and a change may be from good to another good, or a better, the call to the better in the heart of Jesus must have implied in his own inward feelings a discarding of the less perfect way, involving a sense of imperfection.

5. THE PERSONALITY OF JESUS

Through all the shifting patterns in the life of Jesus which New Testament criticism reveals, one thread remains constant. The stories, parables, healings, conversations, are not concerned with some lay figure of an artist's imagination, nor with a God brought down to earth. They reveal a powerful personality. The words "he spake with authority" ring true. Here was a man of great mental and spiritual calibre, who aroused both intense antagonism and intense devotion in the men and women among whom he moved. The perplexities as to what Jesus actually said and did do not arise because he said and did so little, but because he evidently said and did so much—no doubt far more than has been recorded. He falls into no easily labelled human type, but has to be numbered among the great world teachers to whom the world is bound to pay attention. He was not only a leader but a prophet and poet. When all is said, Jesus remains a sublime figure with a magnificent vision of life as it may be lived among neighbours who realize that they are sons of God, and with a capacity for

communicating the splendour of his vision to his followers, and for inspiring them with the desire to achieve it.

6. A NEW CHRISTOLOGY

The Christian Church came into being on the basis of the belief that Jesus had conquered death, and had been exalted to a divine glory. The apostles were convinced that the Cross which had imperilled their faith was not the end. The implications of the whole Easter message were clear from the first: the suffering and ignominious death of Jesus were accepted not as a human tragedy, but as part of the purpose of God. God had ordained it, and had turned disaster into triumph. In the faith of the primitive Christian community, Jesus was a man who became more than a man, a man raised to share the throne of God. This faith was an interpretation of the experience of the disciples.

St. Paul realized this experience afresh with great intensity. For him the crucial fact is his constant sense of union and fellowship with Christ, a living presence in whom he found strength, with whom he sought to be one. Essential to this was the conception that Christ was no longer bound within the limits of a separated personality; he was made one with the Spirit, so that he could live in Paul, and Paul in him. He conceived of Christ as pre-existent, yet this was secondary. The primary and vital fact was the power of Christ and the possibility of union with him. The Fourth Gospel exhibited a similar outlook in a rather different form, the culminating thought being the union and interpenetration of souls in the fellowship of Christ, who himself is one with God. The Christology of the Church has its basis in Christ-mysticism. Through the experience of Christ as risen and glorified, it declared that he was more than man, for man was thought of as rightly separated from the being of God. So in practice the true manhood of Jesus was increasingly denied, and the ultimate definition of the Council of Chalcedon affirmed the two natures of Christ, but left the psychological problem of their union quite unresolved.

This unresolved dualism is most unsatisfactory. It makes the incarnation a supreme miracle occurring in one man at a single point in history, instead of a fact and a possibility in all ages and with all human souls. To-day we can see that Jesus

was a God-possessed soul of whom it was true to say, as the Fourth Gospel affirmed, that he and the Father were one. His assurance that the Father was with him, and His will expressed in his own consecrated will, carried him through all his trials. He lived in the light and love of God, and the light and love of God shone out radiantly through him. If we adopt the language of the mystics, who use the term "deification" for that stage when the mystic is utterly possessed by the love of God, we should say that Jesus was "deified"—God being incarnate in him in the sense that he had risen into a living union with the Divine Life. But if he was "God manifest in the flesh" it was not uniquely, not exclusively; not because he was other than man, but because in him the Divine Light, dimmed in the vast majority by narrowness and egoism, shone brightly through.

Our modern Christology is in constant relationship with our estimate of the Jesus of history. For while the documents are now seen to reveal a figure moving in (to us) an unfamiliar world, in some respects a shadowy and problematical figure, our religious need drives each one of us to develop our own notion of a Jesus translated into modern life; a Jesus who can guide us through life's pitfalls and inspire us by the power of a great friendship. It is significant that a favourite hymn still in frequent use is Theodore Parker's "O thou great Friend to all the sons of men". For modern free Christianity has more and more translated the idea of Christ, the exalted representative of God in human experience, into terms of eternal friendship. In a forbidding world men seek a comrade both human and divinely illumined. According to their need, men behold Jesus, and endow the sublime teacher of Nazareth with the capacity for meeting modern emergencies, accepting him for what he was for every age, a true friend, because he saw the image of God in every human face, and inspired with new hope even the most sinful and friendless in his own age—the woman taken in adultery, and the hated agent of a foreign government, the tax-collector Zacchaeus. And so, while the light which Jesus showed to the world can no longer be seen as the one and only beam from the divine treasury of light (for every age has its light-bringers, a Gautama, a Socrates, a Ramakrishna), its gleam is accepted with gladness, because it is truly "a breath of the power of God, and a clear effluence of the glory of the Almighty".

NOTE ON THE PAPER ON "THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS"

ONE member of the Commission wishes to add a further note on the eschatological interpretation of the Gospels. The criticism that this interpretation works a single idea to exhaustion fails to do justice to the fact that in essence the eschatological hope is rooted in a profound faith in God, and as such involves a whole attitude to life. It is only a single idea in the sense in which faith in God can be described as a single idea.

There is no doubt that the first Christians lived in a state of vivid expectation of the coming (parousia) of the Lord and the supernatural transformation of the existing world order—the coming of the Kingdom of God. There are many passages in the Synoptic Gospels in accord with this outlook. Are these passages merely the reflection of the faith of the first Christians, or was this expectation of the first Christians derived from a faith shared by Jesus himself? If these passages are but a reflection of the faith of the first Christians, how did that faith arise? To assert that this faith does not go back to Jesus is to assert that something vital and fundamental in early Christianity was alien to Jesus. That may be so, but if it be the case, then those who assert that we can know little or nothing of Jesus are justified in their contention. If, however, Mark's Gospel be accepted as fundamentally reliable in the picture it gives of the message and function of Jesus, then the conclusion follows that what was vital in early Christian faith is derived from Jesus himself. There is a consistent presentation of the message and function of Jesus in Mark's Gospel. Jesus is represented as dominated by his conception that the supernatural transformation of the existing world order (the coming of the Kingdom of God) was to be brought into being by his death. The fact that Mark's Gospel does give this consistent interpretation is regarded by many critics as due to "dogmatic" consideration and they have argued: "Dogmatic, therefore unhistorical". Schweitzer turns the argument round and argues: "Dogmatic, therefore historical". By this he means that this interpretation of the function and message of Jesus is to be found in Mark's Gospel

because it existed already in the mind of Jesus, and that therefore Mark's Gospel can be accepted as giving a reliable account of the work of Jesus.

The Kingdom of God did not come. The existing world order was not transformed. But though the expectation was mistaken, and though Christianity has had to learn to overcome the limitations involved in the mistaken form given to the vision and "the history of Christianity is the history of the overcoming of eschatology", the eschatological faith and hope were not a mere mistake. "It may well be that absolute truth cannot be embodied in human thought and that its expression must always be clothed in symbols. It may be that we have to translate the hopes and fears of our spiritual ancestors into the language of our new world. We have to learn, as the Church in the second century had to learn, that the End is not yet, that New Jerusalem, like all other objects of sense, is an image of the truth rather than the truth itself. But at least we are beginning to see that the apocalyptic vision, the New Age which God is to bring in, is no mere embroidery of Christianity, but the heart of its enthusiasm. These ideas are the Christian Hope, to be allegorized and 'spiritualized' by us for our own use whenever necessary, but not to be given up so long as we remain Christian at all. Books which teach us boldly to trust the evidence of our documents, and to accept the eschatology of the Christian Gospel as being historically the eschatology of Jesus, help us at the same time to retain a real meaning and use for the ancient phrases of the *Te Deum*, and for the mediaeval strain of 'Jerusalem the Golden'."¹

¹ Professor F. C. Burkitt in his Preface to "The Quest of the Historical Jesus" by Albert Schweitzer. Published by A. & C. Black.

SIN AND FORGIVENESS

Historical Christianity is a religion of redemption, which finds in sin the fundamental evil of human life. The Christian doctrine is an interpretation and an explanation of moral evil. It interprets wrong-doing as "sin" or alienation from God; it explains such alienation as springing from an inherited tendency, and as due historically to the Fall.

What is the present significance of this teaching? It is often held that the trouble with the world is fundamentally social rather than spiritual—the outcome of bad social conditions rather than of alienation from the Divine. The Christian doctrine points to the fact that the root of evil lies in the unregenerate selfhood which is indifferent to justice and fellowship.

What of the "Fall"? It is sometimes said that sin is the survival of animality. Sin is the outcome rather of the self-consciousness which is peculiar to man. That is the truth which underlies the story of Genesis. In its essence sin is the self-love which separates us from God. The "self" of which man comes to be conscious is initially a separative principle; the tendency to assert that self springs from the fact of our finitude. The self must be enlarged and transformed.

Traditional Christianity has interpreted sin rather as an act than as a state of being—as the transgression of a Divine command. This has led to artificial conceptions of forgiveness. Yet Christianity has brought a genuine experience of forgiveness, as an aspect of that renewal of the soul which the gospel promotes. This is expressed with particular clearness in the Apostolic preaching of Acts 2-3 (where we have a call for the turning of the heart to God which of itself brings forgiveness) and in the teaching of Jesus, for whom the meaning of Divine forgiveness is the outpouring of the Love which finds its end in man's self-giving.

IN the traditional teaching of the Christian Church the conception of sin and the forgiveness of sin has occupied a fundamental place. What is our attitude towards this conception? How far and in what sense can it be said that the consciousness of sin and the realization of forgiveness are a vital aspect of the larger Christianity?

Historical Christianity, like Buddhism, is a religion of redemption. Its basic pre-supposition is that the life of man is everywhere involved in an evil from which it is the deepest need of man to be delivered. Buddhism starts with the assumption that the fundamental evil is suffering, and that our supreme need is to be saved from suffering; Christianity starts with the assumption that the fundamental evil is sin, and that our supreme need is to be saved from sin. In its traditional form Christianity, like Buddhism, is therefore both a diagnosis of the evil of the world and a remedy for that evil. To what extent can we accept the diagnosis and the remedy which it offers?

We must observe, first of all, that the Christian doctrine of sin is not a simple statement of self-evident fact. There is abundant evidence in human life to-day and in the past of the reality and power of moral evil. The traditional doctrine is at once an interpretation and an explanation of this fact. So far as a man does wrong, it tells us, he commits "sin"—he alienates himself from the life of God. Such alienation from the life of God is said to have its source in that inherited tendency of our nature which is known as "original sin". Original sin, again, has been explained as the outcome of a historic event, the "Fall", though in itself it belongs to a reality other than that of history.

In modern times there has been a widespread revolt against the outlook which this terminology expresses. In large measure this revolt is justified. Under the influence of the traditional conception men have tended to look upon human wrong-doing in all its forms as an offence against the infinite majesty of God, and in consequence they have often failed to exercise a due measure of discrimination in their moral judgments. What Percy Dearmer called "the sin obsession" has stood in the way of a rational view of human conduct. St. Augustine speaks of a youthful misdeed—the robbing of an orchard—as the evidence of "a foul soul, falling from God's firmament to utter destruction". The traditional sense of sin has led to an over-emphasis on human frailty. It has produced morbid fears and anxieties, like the dread which for a time haunted the soul of John Bunyan lest he should have unwittingly committed the "unforgivable sin". The sense of sin has, at the same time, often been totally blind to evils like intolerance, persecution,

oppression, injustice, which have desolated the lives of men. In recent times men have become increasingly aware of social wrong, yet it is doubtful how far even now the sense of sin as commonly conceived has come to cover attitudes like the pride of property, of power, of race, of social status.

In spite, however, of traditional distortions, the conception of sin represents an essential element in a spiritual interpretation of life. The main positive significance of the Christian teaching may be seen when it is contrasted with modern alternatives. It is widely held to-day that what is fundamentally wrong with the world is not any defect in the spiritual attitude or the nature of man, but in the constitution of society. This mode of thought was given clear and consistent expression at the end of the eighteenth century by William Godwin, whose thought owed much to the influence of Rousseau and the other French thinkers. Man is good by nature, Godwin taught, but he has fallen into all manner of evils owing to the influence—direct and indirect—of social institutions like private property, monarchy, established religion; and he drew the inference that if the conditions of society are changed, all will be well. That is the kind of attitude which prevails widely in our time among the advocates of radical social change. Evil, as such thinkers often maintain, is not at bottom a question of human nature or human psychology; it is a question of political, social, economic conditions. In certain conditions men act as beasts (the theory implies); in other conditions they act as heroes and saints. The essential problem before the world, on that interpretation, is not an inner or spiritual problem; it is an outer, political or social problem.

In contrast with this teaching, the Christian doctrine declares that evil has its source essentially in the nature and attitude of men. That, of course, does not imply that conditions may not exercise a considerable effect; it does not imply that the Christian ethic itself may not require at any particular time far-reaching changes in the order of society. Human beings live in society, and their lives for good or ill are profoundly affected by the conditions which prevail. The circumstances of to-day are notoriously favourable to juvenile delinquency. Social institutions are not purely external. They carry with them their own moral atmosphere, which may help or hinder our spiritual

growth. It is a distortion of the Christian faith to suggest that it can ever be indifferent to the type of society in which men live. What Christianity does imply is that the fundamental fact beneath the institutions of society is the inner attitude of men. The fundamental evil lies not in any social institutions, however opposed to justice and fellowship, but in the unregenerate human selfhood which is indifferent to the law of justice and fellowship, and from which in the last resort unjust and unequal conditions came.

Sin may be defined as an attitude of soul which alienates man from the Light and Life of God. Can the nature of this attitude be further analysed? Can its origin be understood? It may be well to begin by considering the doctrine of the historic "Fall". We are sometimes told that in the light of modern knowledge the older teaching must be rejected, because modern knowledge centres in the fact of evolution, and what evolution implies is not that man has fallen, but rather than he has risen, and must continue to rise. Evolution is said to offer us an alternative diagnosis to that of traditional Christianity. The evils which beset us now, that is to say, are the result of our animal origin; they are part of the heritage we bear within us from our descent. From this standpoint evil in man is essentially a survival of animality; it represents the recurrence in ourselves of the baser qualities of the "ape and tiger".

Now it is certainly true that we see in men qualities, like ferocity and greed, which are characteristic of the ape and tiger. Spengler spoke of man as "a beast of prey, brave, crafty and cruel", whose nature it is to live "by attacking and killing and destroying". ("Man and Technics". P. 28.) Is that the essential fact underlying the age-old story of "man's inhumanity to man"? Why do men make war on their fellows? Why do they persecute? In the modern world, at least, it is not because they are impelled by any blind instinct of destruction or cruelty. They wage war because they want certain things, they pursue certain ends which throw them into conflict with their fellows. They persecute because they cherish certain antipathies rooted in their dominant outlook. Evil in man, in other words, is not simply a survival; it possesses a new and distinctive quality of its own.

Curiously enough, that is the very idea embodied in the story

of what is known as the "Fall". The event which the story relates is not the loss of an original perfection, but the transition from animal innocence and spontaneity into the self-consciousness which carries with it the knowledge of good and evil. The process may very well be described as a "rise" rather than a "fall". It marks a new and necessary stage in the growth of consciousness. Out of it have arisen all the distinctive achievements and possibilities of human life. But along with the good which the emergence of self-consciousness has brought there has come into life an immensity of evil. "The essence of sin", says Canon O. C. Quick, "is much more closely connected with the new emergence of human self-consciousness than with any survival of animal instincts in man. . . . It is in the conscious self-reference of all man's thought and action, rather than in the animal basis of his appetite, that the occasion of sin and selfishness resides." ("Doctrines of the Creed." Pp. 206-207.)

What is it that alienates man from the Light and Love of God? The traditional assumption has been that men have turned aside by a kind of deliberate and conscious perversity. Yet it is significant that for Jesus the attitudes which are the chief obstacles in the way of union with God are not the attitudes of men performing acts which they know to be sin. (That is doubtless why the word "Sin" is so rarely found in the Synoptic Gospels.) For Jesus there could be nothing more sinful—in fact, nothing more calculated to destroy the possibility of any real union of the soul with God—than the spirit of self-righteousness which rejoices in its own virtues and attainments. The central evil, in a word, is the self-love which separates the soul from the love of God and man. Sin is "an attitude of life which takes it for granted that our self is the ultimate truth" (R. Tagore in "Sadhana". P. 111)—the assertion of the self in its separateness from the love of God and from the fellowship of human souls.

In that sense sin is not the outcome of any mere perversity or of any unbiased choice of evil. It is not the result of any historic catastrophe. The story of the Fall is the story of the growth of self-consciousness, through which man comes to know himself. The "self" which he knows is initially a divisive principle. It is that fact which underlies the doctrine of "original Sin". The term, which is not, of course, found in

the Bible, is apt to be misleading. It carries with it the suggestion—explicitly taught by Augustine and the Protestant Reformers—of the racial transmission of actual guilt. Every child of man, it was held, is involved in Adam's sin, and therefore in his condemnation. In recent times the doctrine has been reasserted by Barthian theologians in a form which leads to a pessimistic view of human possibility. Yet it is important to acknowledge the truth which the doctrine contains. As Thomas Mann has said, it represents a "profound awareness in man as a spiritual being of his own natural infirmity and proneness to err." (Quoted by L. J. Belton in "Can we Believe in Man?" P. 25.) Because we are in our immediate selfhood separated beings, finite centres of life and consciousness, there is in all of us an inborn tendency—springing out of the very fact of our separation, our finitude—to assert our separateness, to exalt our individual being. "The selfhood in every man", says William Blake, "wars against the selfhood in every other." Only as the selfhood is enlarged and transformed can it cease to be a separative power. In his book, "Human Nature", R. Niebuhr contends that the root of sin does not lie in man's finitude, but rather in his power to transcend it. "Man is a sinner, not because he is one limited individual within a whole, but rather because he is betrayed, by his very ability to survey the whole, to imagine himself the whole" (P. 17); "sin is the self's undue pride and exaltation" (P. 293). But the pride which causes man to exalt himself is an aspect of self-love. It is true that the power of self-transcendence enables man to magnify himself to an immeasurable extent, so that the individual in his finiteness may equate himself with God. The essence of the matter, in any case, is the exaltation of the narrow self—the assertion of the self as a separate unit. In one passage Niebuhr virtually admits that this is the case. The self which we assert (he says) "is less than the true self. It is the self in all the contingent and arbitrary factors of its immediate situation" (P. 267). It is the self, in other words, in its finitude, in its particularity, in the qualities which divide us from our fellows.

In laying emphasis on the fact of sin as the fundamental evil from which man needs to be delivered, historical Christianity has seized upon an essential truth. Where the traditional teaching has failed has been in the interpretation of this truth.

It has interpreted sin rather as an act than as a state of being—as a transgression of a divine command rather than as a turning aside from the Life and Light and Love of God. And therefore Christian doctrine has to a great extent misconceived the meaning of forgiveness. It has erected an elaborate structure of theology on the basis of an artificial and juridical conception of the relation between man and God.

Side by side with its theories of atonement, Christianity has brought to men an actual experience of forgiveness and renewal of life. From the first the Apostolic preaching called men to "repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts. C. 2: v. 38). The essence of the matter is clearly this, that Christianity brought to men a quickening of faith through which their inner being was renewed and transformed. "If any man is in Christ (said Paul), he is a new creature: the old things have passed away; behold, they have become new" (II Corinthians. C. 5: v. 17). In the eyes of Paul, it was the constant task of Christian believers to lay hold of the inner renewing power which had come into their lives—"to cast off your old self, and to be renewed in the whole spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which has been created in the image of God". (Ephesians. C. 4: vv. 22-24.)

The forgiveness of sins is an aspect of this inner change. It is an immediate outcome of that turning to the heart of God in faith and love which is the meaning of repentance. "Let your hearts be changed (said Peter to the men of Jerusalem), and be turned to God, that your sins may be completely taken away." (Acts. C. 3: v. 19.) Peter's words are addressed to men whom he regarded as accomplices in the crime of the Cross; it is his teaching that in so far as they change their attitude of mind and spirit, in so far as they acknowledge the wrong which they have done, and determine to live henceforth in accordance with the message which they have spurned, the thought of their sin need not be a burden to them; the knowledge of the darkness of soul from which they have emerged need not weigh upon them; they can go on in confidence and joy to the new life to which they are called, in the assurance of an ever fuller union with the divine Life and Love.

The validity of this example and its significance as an illustration of the early Christian attitude do not depend on its historical

accuracy—although critics generally are agreed that the speeches of Peter represent with substantial truth the outlook of the primitive Church. It helps us, in any case, to see the essential nature and condition of forgiveness. The gospel of the primitive Church, like the gospel of Jesus himself, was a gospel of repentance—a gospel calling for, and bringing about, a change of heart and mind, a redemption of the souls of men from the sin which is blindness to the Light of God. Forgiveness was a characteristic note of the teaching of Jesus. In the picture of the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus shows us with incomparable clearness and simplicity the meaning of the divine forgiveness. He shows us that such forgiveness in its essence is a free and joyous outpouring of love which finds its end in the awakening and renewal of the erring soul. The insight of Jesus sprang out of his assurance of the love of God which is ever ready to flow into the souls of men. The essential thought of Jesus was expressed by Eckhart when he said, "No man desires anything so eagerly as God desires to bring men to the knowledge of Himself. God is always ready, but we are very unready. God is near to us, but we are far from Him. God is within, and we are without. God is friendly; we are estranged." (From Eckhart's sermon on "The Nearness of the Kingdom".)

The dominant idea of Jesus in this connection—which is also the clue to the rational understanding of forgiveness—is the restoration of that unity between the soul and God which sin denies. What is perhaps the most distinctive feature of the teaching of Jesus about the forgiveness of sin—as it is assuredly a mark of his supreme insight—is the correlation which it establishes between Divine and human forgiveness. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive . . ." That is a necessary law of the inner life. The soul can only be at one with God so far as it is possessed of the love which forgives. "She loved much," Jesus said in one of his most original and characteristic utterances, "therefore her sins are forgiven." It is love which makes us one with God: unless we go out freely and unconditionally to forgive those who have done us wrong, we cannot appropriate for ourselves the Divine forgiveness; we cannot open our heart to the Divine and universal Love.

THE ATONEMENT

In its traditional form the doctrine of the Atonement involves pre-suppositions alien to modern thinking. Yet the doctrine contains important elements of truth—in particular, the conception of vicarious suffering, with its implication of a unity in human life and experience transcending individual separateness. At the higher levels of experience love comes into play as a redemptive power—a manifestation of the seeking and saving love of God.

IN traditional Christianity the experience of forgiveness has in general been associated with the death of Christ interpreted as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Through faith in Christ as one who died for them, men have found peace and renewal. The doctrine of the Atonement, as it has been conceived traditionally, involves a whole series of pre-suppositions—concerning such notions as the Fall, the wrath of God, the satisfaction which Divine justice demands of human sin—which are altogether alien to modern thinking. It implies, moreover, an isolation of the death of Jesus both from the general circumstances of his life and from the experience of humanity as a whole which is essentially artificial, and which serves rather to obscure than to illuminate its real meaning. Modern attempts to re-state the doctrine—such as that of Vincent Taylor in "Jesus and his Sacrifice"—are based upon assumptions as to the superhuman character of the person of Jesus which Unitarians cannot accept.

The doctrine of Atonement contains, none the less, elements of truth which are of the greatest value. It is the essence of that doctrine that Jesus suffered vicariously—on behalf of men. "He identified himself so completely with sinful men", says a modern exponent of the teaching of Paul (Professor Kennedy in A. S. Peake's "Commentary on the Bible", P. 810), "that he took upon himself the load of their transgressions." In doing that, it is implied, he brought men deliverance from sin. It is sometimes said that the whole idea of vicarious or redemptive suffering is mistaken. In certain phases both of Jewish and of Indian thought individual personality has been conceived as a

moral unit so rigidly separate that none can suffer on another's behalf, none can be redeemed by another's suffering. But in the higher ranges of Jewish and of other Oriental religious teaching this moral individualism is transcended. In the figure of the Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah we have the picture of one who suffers and dies, not because of any sins of his own, but because of the sins of his fellows. "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. . . . The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." In the religion of India there is a striking parallel to this development of thought. In Mahayana Buddhism it is taught that the true ideal is that of the Bodhisattva, who sets out to give himself in love to all beings, to bring deliverance to all. "Make thine own self," cried a Buddhist writer, "bear the sorrow of thy fellows. . . . Cast upon its head the guilt even of others' works." (Santideva in "The Path of Light" in the "Wisdom of the East" Series. P. 89.)

It is often supposed that guilt is a thing essentially exclusive—attaching only to those who are immediately responsible for wrong. But it is a necessary aspect of our life as members of society that we share a common responsibility and therefore a common guilt. In moral experience the limits of a narrow separatism are constantly transcended. Men often feel a sense of shame for wrongs which others have committed—for the misdeeds of members of their own family or class or nation or race. And such shame clearly implies a sense of inner solidarity—an inner identification with those whose guilt we feel ourselves to share.

It is the fact of this identification with others in their sins and sufferings which is the truth underlying the doctrine of the Atonement. Love is essentially vicarious. "In love (it has been said) we pass beyond the confines of individuality, and are united with others in a union which is not the loss of identity, but the enrichment of life." (Vincent Taylor: "Jesus and his Sacrifice". Pp. 310 f.) Such love is found, not in Jesus only, but in countless numbers of men who have been moved to give themselves in the service of human need. Wherever it exists, the love in human souls is the revelation of the Divine and universal Love. That Love is essentially redemptive. Always

it tends to break down the walls of narrowness and egoism, and to win men for itself. "The death of Christ justifies us," says a medieval writer, "inasmuch as through it charity is stirred up in our hearts." (Peter Lombard, quoted in "Jesus and his Sacrifice". P. 300.) It is the power of sacrificial love that it tends to evoke such "charity". An early biographer speaks of St. Francis as "wellnigh another Christ born for the salvation of souls". That is true of dedicated spirits in every generation. Age by age the seeking and saving love of God is born anew into the world; by the power of that love men are won for God and for His Kingdom.

WORSHIP, SACRAMENTS AND PRAYER

Worship is the dedication of the soul to the Highest, as that which has supreme worth. It is both individual and social, and if the former aspect is dominant for the mystic, the latter is implicit in the Christian emphasis on Love.

Christianity is in the main a sacramental religion, using ordinary temporal things and events as symbols of the Divine. Among Protestants the written and spoken word have been the favourite symbols, and this is still true of most Unitarians. Baptism is commonly practised among them, though there is need for more study of its rationale. The Communion Service, as one of thanksgiving and communion with God, Jesus and the body of his disciples, is still held in a number of Churches.

Mystics and scientists alike have difficulty in accepting the possibility of changing God's will in prayer, but even if this were abandoned there would still remain the spiritual fellowship that prayer brings. Men must be encouraged to bring their real desires to God, and at the same time to raise their desires to a higher level and accept God's will in place of their own.

WORSHIP

WORSHIP is the dedication of the soul to the highest, regarded as having supreme "worth". It is natural for the soul to aspire and adore that which is higher than itself, and adoration is the keynote of worship. Probably all aspiration and adoration (indeed all disinterested enthusiasm) have an element of worship in them, but they may be merely departmental—i.e., directed to something which is not really ultimate, the Highest, though of absorbing interest to the particular individual. Worship of God, the truly ultimate, finds expression in the activities of praise, penitence, prayer and action in accordance with God's will. It is the Divine transcendence that impels men to worship, the Divine immanence what makes worship satisfying.

Personal religion always has an individual and incommunicable side to it. For the mystic this is the dominant aspect, and worship takes place when he is "alone with the alone". But he is apt to forget that our existence and personality are conditioned by social and historical factors. "It is not good that

the man should be alone" (Genesis. C. 2 : v. 18) is true of mature as well as primitive man, and it is not likely that the isolated individual will be able to develop the capacity for the highest worship. If we look at the analogy of the artist or scholar, we can see that he tends to go to seed unless he has the stimulus of personal contact with fellow-workers in the same field, and he certainly could not produce good work without making use of the inspiration of great masters or the writings of others. Moreover, it is only in society that goodness can find its necessary expression in action. This is central to Christianity, and is implicit in the doctrine that God is love. There cannot be perfect harmony with God unless there is active harmony with one's fellow-men. Hence the summons to approach the Lord's Table in what is, for one large section of Christians, the highest point in their worship, goes out only to those who are in love and charity with their neighbours.

A group acting under a single impulse is sensitive to impressions and has a strength of purpose, either for good or ill, that goes far beyond the normal joint capacity of the individuals composing it. Corporate worship will there be one means by which the Divine presence may best be apprehended. There are conditions, both external and internal, that facilitate harmony and communion with God, and it is clearly right that these should be studied and achieved.

As far as possible, the individual should be trained for worship, and certainly the minister who is appointed to conduct public worship must study means of enabling it to fulfil its main task, which is to help the congregation to obtain an enrichment of religious experience, to maintain communion with God, and to set itself to do God's will, and obtain at the same time an access of moral power. People differ greatly in what they find helpful in a service. Some are helped more by the familiar, others by the novel. The Anglican Liturgy, with its wealth and beauty of devotional utterance, has a great charm for many people, but others find that constant repetition tends to dull the appreciation of its meaning and make it formal.

SACRAMENTS

Those religions, including Christianity, which emphasize the importance of public worship inevitably make considerable

use of symbolism, either visual, verbal, or both. The relationship between the Holy and the ordinary temporal events of life may be regarded in three ways. First, the Holy may be swallowed up in them and practically cease to be itself. This is secularism, and is exemplified in those who neglect corporate worship, saying that they can worship God in the fields, when they do not really intend to worship at all. Secondly, these events may be entirely rejected and treated as irrelevant or obstacles to communion with the Divine. This is a tendency which characterizes mysticism in some of its forms. In his emphasis on the supreme reality of the Infinite and Eternal, the mystic is apt at times to ignore the value and significance of finite and temporal things. He seeks then to withdraw from such externals, in order to contemplate the Imperishable.

Thirdly, these events may be used as symbols to interpret the meaning of the Holy, though kept in their place as its servants. This attitude gives sacramental religion, which may be subdivided into priestly and prophetic religion, according as the emphasis falls on the "visible" or the spoken word. Christianity (like Judaism) has been on the whole a sacramental religion, comprising both priestly and prophetic elements, though in Protestantism the prophetic, relying on the spoken and written word, has certainly predominated.

Historically, our churches belong to this Protestant tradition. Their basis of freedom makes them free to change their symbols as the old cease to be helpful as pointers to God and other new ones become available in their place, and the whole subject of symbolism in our worship is deserving of more attention than it generally receives. But in practice our churches are still dominated in the main by the prophetic tendency to think of God as revealed *par excellence* in the written and spoken word, especially the latter. None of us would regard the Christian Bible as infallible or as the only set of writings inspired by God. We see no reason why the sacred writings of other religions should not be recognized as inspired, nor do we believe that the canon was drawn up by men directly and infallibly inspired to include certain books and reject others. Thus the so-called First Epistle of Clement is just as much the word of God to those who have studied and appreciated it as III John or Jud¹. This is not to deny that, broadly speaking, the canon was w

fixed, and the Christian Bible with all its historic associations does speak to us as no other literature can do.

On the subject of the spoken word, we are in even closer agreement with the Protestant tradition. The utterance of the Holy Spirit through the minister and prophet in the sermon holds the place, which in Catholicism is assigned to the Mass, of the supreme sacrament and means of Divine Grace. The sermon is the central part of our worship, and at its highest it is not the mere expression of one man's opinions, culled from his own reading and conversation, but is the word which God is speaking to the congregation through his prophet. It is widely recognized amongst us that a period of silence at some point in the service also has sacramental value, as giving an opportunity to the individual to bring his special needs before God and to receive a direct and immediate response. The sacraments which Augustine called the "visible words" are less prominent in our worship, and it must be admitted that they are often celebrated with an imperfect grasp of their significance. For some of us the Communion Service is felt to be a narrowing, restrictive factor, associated with a view of Divine Grace which is false because it suggests that it operates only among a section of men, those who hold at least some form of the Christian faith. Others among us find little difficulty in re-interpreting it in such a way that this false view is discarded and we simply acknowledge our historical debt to Jesus as the revealer of God, and seek by these symbols communion at once with God and with Jesus and the whole body of his disciples past and present. It thus becomes essentially a Eucharist, a thanksgiving, and we believe that this is true to its original significance. In practice, no doubt, those who attend this service do so because it gives a most solemn and uplifting experience, but it does this only because it is a reminder of what Jesus did and was.

Strangely enough, there is far less opposition in our churches to the other sacrament almost universally recognized among Christians, the rite of Baptism, and especially Infant Baptism. It might well be questioned whether this rite has any real significance apart from traditional theories of the Atonement and Redemption. Perhaps it would be possible to reinterpret it on lines suggested by Calvin, who held that it was not necessary for salvation, since omission to perform the rite could not

frustrate the promises of God, and who regarded it as a sign that the children of the Church are born into the Christian inheritance and are meant to receive the promises of God, made not only to us but also to our seed. (Calvin: "Institutes". IV. xvi: 9.)

We should, of course, interpret these promises somewhat differently from Calvin, but there seems no reason why we should not accept the view that membership of the Church brings about a change that may be appropriately thought of in terms of the symbol of re-birth and purificatory washing. The rite is a meaningless survival unless the parents are prepared to see that the child is brought up in the household of faith. Probably to most people in our churches the ceremony is regarded merely as one of dedication by the parents. This can hardly be regarded as an adequate re-interpretation of the ceremony; unless the vital part of the rite can be shown to consist not solely in the act of the parents, but in the reception of the child by the Church and the spiritual experience communicated to those present, so that the action of the minister or person celebrating the Baptism is not superfluous, some other ceremony would be more fitting. At the very least it may be taken as an expression of our view that all men are potentially children of God. To conclude, these sacraments, rightly understood, are valuable elements in our relationship with God. They are not necessary in the sense that His grace cannot act without them, but they are valuable as symbols of the relationship which can yet exist without them. They have been aptly compared with the handshake which is a token of an already existing friendship.

PRAYER

A particular aspect of worship is prayer. Prayer appears in history in an astonishing variety of forms. It may be the spontaneous expression of an overwhelming religious experience, or the mechanical recitation of an incomprehensible formula; its contents may be a petition for daily bread or a yearning for God Himself, a cry for vengeance or an intercession for persecutors. But in every instance of genuine prayer, it is as if the worshipper is speaking with God, who is immediately present, and with whom there is a vital spiritual intercourse. No doubt the savage personifies many natural objects and talks to them, much as a child will, but this is not prayer unless he stands in a relation

of worship to them. On the other hand, he may have a feeling of awe towards, and even adore, objects and spirits which he believes to have power over him, without praying to them. To be the object of prayer, the power or numen must be borne by a Being to whom it is possible to ascribe personality. In the course of the development of religion the anthropomorphism is refined; God ceases to be bound to specific places, He does not see or hear with human eyes and ears, He has no human needs and desires such as can be gratified by food offerings. But the conception of a real influence of man upon God, and of God's will as capable of being changed, persists into the higher religions. Jesus seems to have held it in a way that is almost naïve (*e.g.*, the Parable of the Unrighteous Judge), and Luther characteristically remarks, "If I did not know that our prayer would be heard, the Devil might pray in my stead". This conception is probably that which presents most difficulty for educated Christians to-day.

For the mystic, indeed, this difficulty hardly exists. He does not think of God as an external power intervening at this or that point in human life, but as the inmost Light and Life of the Soul, with which he seeks to be made one. He does not expect or desire to change God's will in the interest of human desire. His attitude is very well summed up in the illustration given by the pseudo-Dionysius. "He who stands in a boat and seizes a rope flung to him from a rock and pulls it in does not draw the rock to himself, but brings himself and the boat nearer to the rock." While most mystics, especially in Christianity, continue to address God in anthropomorphic language and to engage in petitionary prayer, they tend to identify prayer at its highest with the Divine contemplation in which the soul attains the consciousness of Divine union. Eckhart goes so far as to say, "Praying for aught save God alone is idolatry and unrighteousness". He adds, "When praying for someone, Henry or Conrad, I pray at my weakest. When praying for no one, I pray at my strongest." We even find the statement in a certain Sufi mystic, "I am in love, and I know not with whom". It would be wrong to dismiss this as mere subjective eroticism; the writer is reaching out to embrace an object so vast as to elude description. The vagueness of much mystical language is due to a determination to transcend the definable and grasp the whole. The experience of the mystic is in its very nature

one which cannot be described in such a way as to make it fully comprehensible to those who have never had it. The description the mystics give of their prayer life often sounds for this very reason vague and inadequate to those whose religious experience is of a different order.

The view that we must now discard as an outdated anthropomorphism any idea of changing God's will by prayer does not necessarily mean abandoning all real prayer as illusion. It may still be a genuine communion between man and God, and we may be as confident as ever that, to use Soderblöm's words, "In the depths of our inner life we have not a mere echo of our own voice . . . but a reality higher and greater than our own, which we can adore and in which we can trust". Most of us would probably agree with Heiler that "the miracle of prayer does not consist in the accomplishment of the prayer, in the influence of man upon God, but in the mysterious contact that comes to pass between the finite and the infinite Spirit". After all, prayer is an end in itself, not merely a means to attaining the fulfilment of our desires. It is the intercourse and companionship with God in which we obtain satisfaction of our deepest needs, and the answer to prayer that really satisfies is the response of God to that need.

Nevertheless, if the possibility of effecting any other change except in ourselves and our immediate contact with God were excluded it would inevitably make a great difference to the content of our prayer. It is doubtful, for instance, whether most people would continue to offer intercessory prayer as we ordinarily understand it. Attempts have been made to give intercession a naturalistic validity by suggesting that by telepathy, or some such means, it may operate directly upon those for whom the prayer is offered, without any special or "occasional" intervention of Providence being necessary, and it is probable enough that such influence does occur; but it is doubtful whether any such explanation would satisfy the ordinary praying man. The problem is really that of particular Providence, and if the philosophic objections to occasional intervention are valid, the consequences for prayer are certainly of great importance.

What, however, is of supreme importance is that nothing shall be done to discourage the bringing of men's actual desires

before God. They must be taught always to pray in the spirit of Jesus when he added, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt". And no doubt it is a part of the function of every religious community to endeavour to raise the desires of its members to a high level. But so long as men have other and often stronger desires than that for their own moral improvement, it is disastrous to hold, as many do, that this is the only legitimate subject for prayer. Such a view will inevitably lead to hypocrisy and a feeling that prayer is unreal, while conversely nothing is more likely to lead men to criticize their desires by a high standard than a habit of bringing them to God. The traditional Christian view, which Aquinas ascribes to Augustine, is that "it is right to pray for anything that it is right to desire" (Aquinas: "Summa Theologica". II. ii. Q. 83: art. 6), and, as has just been stated, there is no better way of testing the quality of our desires than to bring them before God. If there is any value in the Christian symbolism by which our relationship to God is compared with that of child and father, it should surely come out here. No human parent would rejoice to think that every desire except the desire to please him had been extinguished in his child, even if this were possible; and if the child had other desires, he would surely be glad to be told of them, even if there were good reasons why they could not be gratified.

Where there is no prayer, faith remains a theoretical conviction, worship is an external and formal procedure, and, if what we have called the sacramental view of religion is true, man remains separate from God. Religion is, indeed, just the overcoming of this separation between man and God. It demands the elimination of sin, but that cannot alone abolish the separation, since as we approach nearer to the ideal, it simply recedes to a higher level. Even the mystic recognizes that we start with a separation, though he believes that in his experience it is transcended. The danger is that he will ignore rather than transcend the distinction, and simply short-circuit the whole of religion. Where he really does achieve transcendence, and has found a place in his religious life for something resembling personal communion, we have religion in its highest form. But such a mystic will agree with both savage and prophet that prayer is the essential bridge. There is, after all, no great

difference of outlook here between Luther, when he says, "We cannot come to God except through prayer alone, for He is too high above us", and the mystic Johann Arndt, "In prayer the highest and the lowest come together, the lowliest heart and the most exalted God".

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

The Church exists to preserve, propagate and practise a way of life. This involves a doctrine of God and man, the practice of the relation of man to God in worship, and the practice of the relation of man to man in Christian morality.

MANY people whose view of life is definitely religious refuse to be members of any religious body. They tell us that they believe in God and have the highest reverence for Jesus. They say that if Christianity means living according to the teaching of Jesus they would like to be considered Christians. Yet they can see no good in what they call "Organized Christianity" or "Institutional Christianity". They point out that the Churches, so far from exhibiting the spirit of their Master, display the exact opposite. He stood for charity where they stand for bigotry; he was the friend of the poor where they are the pillars of the established order; he gave his life for others where they seek power and wealth for themselves. Sharply opposed to the judgment of such critics is the judgment of apologists who speak of the Church not only with approval, but even with reverence. These apply to the Church such descriptions as "The bride of Christ", "The body of Christ", "That wonderful and sacred mystery", etc. On the one hand, the communist believes that the Christian Church stands in the way of the emancipation of the masses; on the other, the orthodox Christian claims that it is the one agency capable of rebuilding western civilization on sane principles. The contradiction between these points of view seems absolute. It may be, however, that if we examine both the claims and the criticisms, we shall find it possible to come to some positive conclusions. First, then, let us consider the nature and function of the Church as they might be conceived by a member.

The Church exists to preserve, propagate and practise a way of life. Previous papers have to some extent defined in detail the nature of that way; the Church claims that it is set forth in essence in the Gospels. Let us be content to note that it involves three things: (1) a doctrine of God and man, (2) the practice of

the relation of man to God, which is worship, and (3) the practice of the relation between man and man, which is Christian morality. It must, however, be insisted that these three, though separable for the purpose of discussion, are in reality but one.

Before considering these three aspects of the Christian way, it may be well to enlarge for a moment on the Church's business as guardian of that way. The Church exists to preserve it from two dangers. One of them is, or rather was, the danger of oblivion. The first guarantee the Church offered that the life and teaching of Jesus should not be forgotten was the living presence of the Apostles who had witnessed them. So long as the end of the age was expected immediately, that was all that was necessary. As this expectation receded, the Church provided further guarantee in the form of written documents. Through all the centuries the Church kept the memory of these things alive by causing passages to be read regularly from these documents. Perhaps there is no longer any possibility of men utterly forgetting Jesus. That is a tribute to the Church's effort: but there is a very definite possibility that large numbers of men may live in circumstances calculated to make them think of Jesus as a historic character rather than an influence on their lives. So long as that danger remains, this part of the Church's work is not complete. The other danger from which the Church had to preserve the way was that of misconception. Of this more will be said hereafter.

The Church's task of propagating the way is important, because it gives us the idea of universality. Much of the energy of the early Church was devoted to the spread of Christianity throughout the known world, and its efforts were attended with remarkable success. To-day most of the Churches dream of the conversion of all men to Christianity, expressed in such hymns as:

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run."

No one will doubt that the Church has always believed itself to be called upon to practise as well as proclaim its way.

Now let us return to the distinction we drew when we spoke of three aspects of the way. First there is the doctrinal aspect. Here the Church's primary duty is to formulate its teaching as

clearly as possible, in order to avoid misunderstanding. From this necessity originated the creeds. If they have on the whole been harmful rather than profitable, that is due to the failure of the Church in carrying out what it undertook rather than in the nature of the undertaking. If the process of theological formulation had been related in the mind of the Church to its own emphasis on charity as the supreme human relation, two advantages might have been gained. One would have been a determination to find statements which would include the best elements in the teaching of non-Christians and heretics. Something was done along these lines when Justin Martyr recognized Socrates as a Christian before Christ, or when Christian apologists accepted the teaching of some of the Stoics as in harmony with their own. Much more might have been done in the early centuries, and the same may be said of the Church to-day. Even where there existed differences so profound that no compromise was possible, the Church betrayed its own mission in allowing controversy to become persecution.

Another problem faced the Church regarded in its teaching aspect. Its claim to authority rested on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

As the vehicle of living inspiration, the Church was committed to a creative view of its work. Its duty was not simply to perpetuate something given, but to add to its teaching the results of a constantly renewed revelation. This duty was implied in several ways. In formulating the canon of the New Testament, for instance, the Church did not confine itself to those books which set forth the words and acts of Jesus, but included others in which it recognized the presence of the Spirit. Again, the Church did not shrink from a considerable revision of its beliefs when it was challenged by the delay in the Second Coming. Yet in the large issues that have arisen during the greater part of its history the tendency to preserve the old and reject the new has been overwhelming. Again and again reformers whose message has come to be recognized in later days as expressing the essential Christian spirit have been condemned as heretics. The new approach to truth which made possible all the triumphs of modern science, instead of being welcomed, was regarded as merely dangerous and destructive. Thus the Church must bear a considerable share of responsibility for the current antagonism between the religious and scientific

points of view. If the coming of science had been hailed as a divine gift of infinite promise, the Church might have given such direction to scientific activity that its contributions to human well-being would have been immeasurably increased.

The Church naturally claimed to be the final authority in the sphere with which it was concerned. The idea of private judgment does not necessarily invalidate this claim. Private judgment cannot legitimately claim more than private validity. If the private judgment of any man is regarded as having a value for others, it is because it is not merely private. It satisfies the test of being harmonious with the judgment of those who are competent to judge in the same sphere. In the sphere of religion the judgment of the individual must be tested by that of those whose living and thinking have made them familiar with religious problems. The individual is likely to form a sound judgment if in forming it he has used the means available for obtaining that kind of knowledge. But whatever else the Church may claim, it can never claim that its judgment is infallible. The Church has repudiated such a claim, even while advancing it, by revising its past judgments.

As a Church is necessary for the preservation of right teaching, so it is necessary as the means of right practice. When we turn to the subject of worship we see this. Some people to-day assert that they worship without a Church. There is, indeed, a sense in which Professor Whitehead's description of religion as "what a man does with his solitariness" is profoundly true. The relation of man to God is, on one side, something individual. There is an element in the experience of each worshipper which is peculiar to him, being found with what is unique in his being. But it is much truer to say that the relation is communal. The worshipper is expressing his attitude to God who sees him as a member of a great family. The nature of Christian worship is such that its vision of God is unreal if it does not involve a new comradeship with men. Worship offered to God by the individual alone, if it is the only worship offered, is never fully Christian, because it leaves out the vital element of fellowship. Thus religion is not only what a man does with his solitariness, but also what he does with his gregariousness. This truth is enshrined in the Catholic view that the Mass is the most potent means of grace; it is the service in which the idea of fellowship is most fully expressed. In corporate worship a man is released

from his individual limitations. The attitude into which he enters is enriched by the devotion of men of distant lands and ages. Through it he is enabled to feel his solidarity with all the servants of God.

The same thought occurs when we turn to Christian morals, the relation of man to man. One of the characteristics of Christianity is the closeness of the relation between love of God and of man. It is not expressed by saying that there is duty to God and a duty to the neighbour, but that these duties are one and the same thing. God is to be found in man. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye did it unto me." "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" One of the most important reasons for the existence of the early Church was the need for a society in which this special sense of human relations could express itself. There is, however, always the danger that such a society may become exclusive; the love of the brethren which it was intended to express may be displaced by hatred of the outsider.

These are two sayings in the Gospels which may originally have been one: "He that is not against us is for us", and "He that is not with us is against us". The first comes near to expressing the spirit which triumphs over human antagonisms; the second is itself the spirit of antagonism. It has often been the dominant spirit in the Christian Church. Whether that Church has an important contribution to make to the well-being of mankind will depend ultimately on its ability to be true to the vision of human relations implied by the idea of the Fatherhood of God.

Before we turn to a consideration of the case against the Church let us try to make some estimate of its positive achievements. It has kept alive the memory of the sayings and deeds of Jesus even when its own conduct has contradicted them. The critic who charges the Church with the betrayal of the principles of its Founder, would not be able to do so if the Church had not preserved and propagated them. It has greatly enriched the seeker to-day by its accumulation of the spiritual insight of over nineteen centuries. It has ennobled worship by a vast treasury of devotional architecture, literature, art and music. It has contributed to the making of many saints whose examples

are a permanent asset to humanity. Finally, it has furnished the ideal which has sweetened and dignified the lives of innumerable common men.

Now let us consider some of the principal objections which may be urged by those who expect no help for mankind from the Church. It must be remembered that merely historical considerations are irrelevant here, our purpose being to face a current question. Criticism is likely to be concerned with three points. Let us take the argument from the Church's divisions. The Church, it may be said, cannot have an important influence upon the future of mankind because it has no agreed message. It is divided into sects which are mutually suspicious, behaving to each other in a way which reproduces the worst features of non-religious societies. It cannot even give an agreed account of its own doctrines and origins, still less can it prophesy with one voice as to the direction in which human society should move. What, it may be asked, is its judgment on nationalism, imperialism, fascism or communism, capitalism or socialism? The answer in every case is that the Church has no agreed judgment. In short, the first objection to the universal Church of Christ is that this universal Church does not exist.

Others will feel that the greatest obstacle to the acceptance of the Church is its obscurantism. The mental climate of the twentieth century is vastly different from that of the ages in which the creeds were made. In those days truth was conceived statically; to-day it is conceived as progressive. Science has given man a new sense of fact, and new means of forming historical judgments. Further, the idea of natural law is in itself enough to make a new intellectual society. Yet official Christianity has made no serious attempt to adjust its doctrines to these changes. The old creeds stand. Scholars here and there, and even small sects, protest, but Christianity as a whole is deeply committed to outworn modes of thought. For this reason Christianity is not only unfitted to cope in an enlightened way with present and future problems, but its influence actually retards many men who apart from it would be capable of realistic and constructive thinking.

The third ground of criticism is that the Churches are deeply involved in the support of vested interests. Protestantism is historically bound up with nationalism, many of the large

Churches having originated as separate entities as a result of nationalistic movements. This fact invalidates the Christian witness in two ways. In times of national crisis, and even more in war, each Church is dominated by the ideas of its own national group. Even the Catholic Church, which claims to be international in a special way, does not in fact provide for its members a supernational loyalty in the time of testing. The influence of nationalism is also fatal in the mission-field. The British missionary in India, for example, is generally regarded as a missionary for Britain no less than for Christ. But class interests also have an important influence on the policies of the Churches. They derive their income from those who control wealth under the existing system, and they hold it on condition that they are of use in perpetuating the system. They cannot effectively advocate economic changes because these would bring about their own ruin.

The Church cannot legitimately deny these charges, though it may regard them as half-truths. Its best defence is to distinguish between its own ideal and its practice. It cannot claim that it is in fact united, but it can claim that its doctrine of love, if fully applied, would reduce disunity in its ranks to the difference of emphasis which follows from differences of upbringing and attainments. It cannot claim to be free from obscurantism, but it can claim that its final loyalty, when it is true to itself, is not to any creed or system, but to the spirit of truth. It cannot claim to be, in fact, superior to nation or class, but it can claim that its highest vision is of God who is no respecter of persons.

It remains to discover whether we are now in a position to offer any advice to the seeker who, believing in the truth and necessity of religion, finds it hard to identify himself with any of the Churches. In the first place, we can challenge him to take a positive attitude. It is not enough to find a theory which satisfies his reason or an adequate code of private morals, because effective religion is never merely a theory, but a gospel, and can be worked out only in fellowship. When the full force of all the criticisms of organized Christianity has been admitted, the fact remains that Christianity or any other religion must be organized if it is to have any considerable influence upon the fortunes of humanity. Those who have been working for progress inside the Churches for many years, are not encouraged

by the critic who has often not taken the trouble to discover the existence of small progressive movements alongside the large historic Churches. Had he done so, he would have found that the causes in which he believes are struggling unsuccessfully for recognition just because they lack his support.

Next to the duty of being positive is that of being critical. The faults of the Churches are more often due to timidity and complacency than to wickedness. Many men shrink from criticizing their Churches because they do not wish to injure institutions which they regard as mainly good, for the sake of incidental faults. But the purpose of a Church is never merely that of self-preservation. If it ceases to be the vehicle of the living Spirit, it will become an obstacle to the operation of that spirit in other movements. It would be better for a Church to perish as an institution than to preserve institutional life with a dead soul. The Churches require criticism—they cannot live without it. In the past they have been served not only by those who were called their pillars, but also by those who were driven by the Spirit into the wilderness.

There is in our view a condition which must be observed if a Church is to deliver a message adequate to the needs of to-day and to-morrow. Its ministers and members must be free to explore and declare truth without credal restrictions. What is most valuable in the long Christian tradition can make its full contribution to thought and morals, only if it can be freed from less desirable accretions and from ideas which have lost the validity they once had. With this freedom there can be no compromise. Attempts are made in some quarters to preserve it by demanding from all assent to the same creeds, but allowing to each liberty of interpretation. We hold that the freedom and the unity so obtained are alike spurious.

The seeker must not expect to find in the Churches an instrument ready to his hand. He must ask himself which of them offers the best prospect of being made fit to fulfil the purposes of the living Spirit. Perhaps there is but little hope that organized Christianity as a whole will respond to the challenge and opportunity of this time, but we believe that when we invite the discriminating seeker to come and help us, we can offer him ideas and comradeship that will make his thought and action fruitful in the service of God and man.

unconscious of the earlier series of actions, we build upon them and control them, but are conscious only of those whose control we are acquiring. A pianist can progress so far that he can play a complicated piece of music, involving thousands of acts of attention and movement, and yet carry on a conversation over his shoulder at the same time. Although there has been a series of acquired habits, it is possible for the controlling mind to exercise central command.

Butler maintained that we acquired such habits as digestion, breathing, speech, in the persons of our ancestors in remote times; that there has been an accumulating organism continuing through the ancestry; that there has been a continuous mind running through the ancestry, inherited in each generation, conserving in the unconscious and subconscious mind the epitomized powers of the ancestry; that the organism has repeated the processes whenever it has found itself at the stages at which they have been called for; that the processes, through innumerable repetitions, have been facilitated enormously and epitomized.

Biologists, not inconsiderable in eminence or number, espoused Butler's thesis. Men of letters, like R. L. Stevenson, W. B. Yeats, Robert Bridges, A. E. Housman, expressed their belief in inherited memories. Bergson saw that consciousness was integrally bound up with memory, as both Hering and Butler had taught. But in recent years it has been the leading psychologists who have been pre-eminent in endorsing the view. Freud's exposition of the unconscious raised the question: What was the unconscious and where did it come from? McDougall fully adopted Butler's doctrine. Sir Percy Nunn applied it in education. Freud and Jung came to adopt it expressly, explaining that the unconscious was the inherited mind functioning without the control of the waking mind.

Butler's doctrine implied not only, as does the general theory of evolution, that there is no absolute separation between us and animals and between animals and plants, but that, expressly, animals and plants have mind,¹ that inheritance takes place by epitomizing the early and oft-repeated elements in the ancestral growth. In the reproduction of the organism the germ cell

¹ Julian S. Huxley: "The generally accepted view is that all life has a mental as well as a material aspect"—"The Listener". December 10th, 1942.

bears in it both the general structure and functioning evolved from the ancestry¹ and also some very detailed features inherited from recent ancestors²—in a human being, for example, even some turn of expression. It possesses the astonishing power of producing any necessary hereditary organ out of any part of itself. Utterly unlike any machine, cells in living things can act for each other and work together for a common purpose. "Each part acts as if it knew what the other parts are doing" (Nägeli). Professor Wood Jones has drawn attention to the fact that in the developing embryo, threads come together, unerringly selecting opposite numbers, end to end, and joining to make perfect wholes. The ancestral structure is built and modified, not only recapitulating the ancestral history, but adapting it and itself to new needs, and anticipating functions. In inheritance, certain groups of characters are dominant and others recessive—*e.g.*, maleness is dominant and femaleness recessive and vice versa. In the same family one child may "throw back" to certain phases in the ancestry and another to others.

The idea develops that, instead of life being reduced to mechanism, the mechanism has been brought into existence by life. Butler pursued this line of thought, and came to the conclusion that there was no break in the continuity of the development of the universe, but that we must come to think of even the

¹ "The plants form the cells, it is not the cell that forms the plant" (A. de Bary).

² "Acquired characters are not inherited." Great as has been the deference paid to Weismann and his school, much evidence has been adduced against this doctrine. Hering wrote, "Theories concerning the development of the individual which insist on an entirely fresh start for every being, as though the infinite number of generations gone before might as well never have lived, for all the effect they have had on their descendants—such theories will contradict experience at every touch and turn". It may be suggested that the issue is, after all, simple. What is meant by "acquired"? On the view we are following, it must mean acquired by the life, the mind: that is, continuous in a given biological descent. Now, to cut off the tails of mice or to quote circumcision is beside the mark. These are mutilations imposed and not characters acquired by the hereditary organism. Secondly, does "acquired" mean "acquired in one generation only" or "acquired over a number of generations"? By the Weismann school the former is naively assumed, as it is by the man in the street. From the point of view of biological inheritance, it would not be expected that a habit acquired in one generation, but only that habits acquired over a number of generations, should be visibly inherited. If "acquired" in the Weismann formula means "acquired over a number of generations", and it is held that such characters are not inherited, then if all living things have evolved from a common ancestor, how can this have come to pass?

“inanimate” as in some sense living and purposive. He was not alone in this position. For example, in 1887 Professor Judd pointed out that a large number of analogies exist between crystals and living things, the former having their morphology, physiology, embryology, etc., like the latter. “The distinctions between living and non-living matter”, he wrote, “are not essential and fundamental; cycles of change, exactly similar to those occurring in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, are equally characteristic of the mineral kingdom, though in the latter they are difficult to follow on account of the extreme slowness with which they take place.” The difference between a crystal and a plant, he said, is much the same as that between a plant and an animal. These views were claimed to be confirmed experimentally by Sir Jagadis Bose.

The full meaning of all these facts is not yet clear. Some of the facts themselves are disputed. But these considerations point to an interpretation of nature very different from the dominant ones of the present time. The views of those scientists who are not satisfied with current theories can no longer be dismissed with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulder. Orthodoxy in biology is as liable to blind men’s eyes as orthodoxy in theology.

II. THE MYTH

[NOTE BY THE EDITOR.—*This Paper is included by the Commission as stating an individual point of view worthy of serious consideration. Its inclusion does not imply the acceptance of that point of view by the Commission as a whole.*]

The relationship between God and man is most real at those points of contact that stretch out into the unknown. This does not necessarily imply mysticism, but it does imply that something more than the “scientific” attitude is necessary for its elucidation. The unknown is partly the field of the artist, but he works within certain limitations; one of these is his individuality—he cannot express the total range of experience known to the community. The work of Shakespeare and Michael Angelo can still be criticized.

The religious story is lived continuously by the community; it is the reference for action. The spectator of a Shakespearian tragedy is not saved or damned according to what happens to the leading tragic figure. The Christian devotee is saved or damned according to what happens in the Christian story.

In the Christian story there are factual historical parts, but as stated in the Apostles’ Creed it is the creation of the total religious experience of the community. It holds and symbolizes those experiences of the unknown which form the contact between the ordinary man and God.

Instances of this experience are provided by such phrases as “Jesus Christ the Son of God”, “He rose again on the third day”, “From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead”.

If the historic Jesus be accepted as fact, his life by no means accounts totally for the Christian religion. It has been communally created.

This approach to the traditional Christian belief makes possible a new, friendly understanding of Christian “orthodoxy”, or leaves the way open for a new development of Christian belief without a break with the historic past.

THE relationship between God and man as conceived by the man in the street has been most real at those points of human

experience that stretch out emotionally into the unknown. The focal points of birth, marriage and death, for instance, are introductions into a vast mystery of being in which the Divine Presence is most actually felt. There is a tremendous finality in these particular experiences; there is also a vast hinterland of emotional experience that cannot be brought into the usual compass of human understanding. In their finality they are overwhelmingly real, and because of this reality they stretch far away into realms of being that possess an emotional signature of their own. Needless to say, these experiences are not known by all men on the same level of meaning; but when they are conceived in the general spiritual apprehension that men have drawn around them, then they are patterned points at which the necessity of God breaks in.

It is not intended to draw any hard-and-fast line between experiences. The sudden vivid apprehension of the total mystery of the universe, for instance, or the sudden illumination of the spiritual side of suffering, will bring the God-man relationship as close as in any other experience. What is intended is to indicate that in the broad pattern of life for the ordinary man, conceived at large through certain human experience, there is a vast hinterland of emotional knowledge that cannot usually be expressed in the language of day-to-day concerns, or even in language that fits in with day-to-day notions of reality. These human experiences are the points at which the relationship between God and man becomes most expressive and vital.

It must not necessarily be assumed that these points of experience offer an easy way into what is sometimes called mysticism. They can be made as strictly "scientific" as any person can choose. But when that has been done, when all the "mystery" has been taken from them, then, for ordinary human contact to have meaning, something beyond the "scientific" must be brought into their elucidation. As far as can be seen whilst human nature attempts to range into the emotionally significant (as contrasted with the emotionally neutral and simple concrete), there are certain vast experiences that break out into the unknown; and it is in that unknown that the usual God-conscious person will be aware of a reality that sustains and explains the experience.

What is perceived by the man in the street on one level is perhaps perceived by the philosopher on another. The latter when aware of a relationship between God and man will try to express that relationship in terms of the laws of thought. If the philosophic system be regarded as the apogee of this effort, then the system will strive to express the nature of the relationship in terms of mind as well as those of emotion. The philosopher will attempt to bring the totality of the experience into the grasp of the human mind. But nevertheless, when the effort has been made in its most impressive form, when it has been made so effectively that it brings new illumination into human experience, then there still remains a whole range of emotional knowledge that will not be enclosed or explained by the philosophic system. All that the latter can do is to refine, make clearer, the primal experience; it cannot grasp the vast hinterland of the mystery. Outside the range of the philosopher—as philosopher—is the emotional reality of experiences that cannot be made to conform to what may be called the laws of thought.

Both for the man in the street and the philosopher, therefore, there is a need to comprehend this emotional reality in a way that represents neither what is called "scientific" nor the sequence of logical thought. The hinterland of the experience must be made immediately familiar by the use of symbols and patterned relationships that have a different function from, say, the expression of ideas.

This, of course, is partly the field of the artist. He is sensitive in a continuous way to the need to create symbols of line, sound and form to express emotional reality for those who know, and yet do not know so vividly as the artist. He makes the experience richer by making the hinterland of emotion more delicate and imperative. Thus the sensitive fact of those experiences already mentioned has been made more sensitive just because the artist has created symbols that have made it more nervously responsive to the reality into which it enters. As the artist further explores this reality, so he refines, makes more acute, the actual starting-point of experience. Birth, marriage and death, as experiences, have been made more significant, less factual and "natural", by the constant process of defining and deepening their meaning. As they become more refined in their emotional

demands, more charged with delicate choices, they become more imperative in the demands they make upon the integrity of the human spirit. To that degree they open up the reality of the emotional experiences that lie beyond them. It is one of the attributes of the artist that in this manner he is adding to the riches of human endeavour.

But although this is true, the artist works within certain limitations. He is an individual, and no matter how great his art is, it still must pass through individual experience. It is still fragmentary in the sense that it does not express the total apprehension of reality known to the community in which he finds himself. From the point of view of the community the work of Michael Angelo and Shakespeare is still open to criticism, for the community has a range and depth of experience not known to the artists.

This is not a question-begging statement, because although the criticism is bound to come from the individual, he can and does as an individual call upon the knowledge of the community from which to offer his criticism. No artist is ever great enough to embody the total wisdom of the community in which he lives; there is always a vast mass that eludes his grasp and makes his work an individual contribution rather than a summation of the emotional knowledge of the tradition of life in which he finds himself.

In this manner the symbolism and emotional patterns can be contrasted with the symbolism and emotional patterns of religion. The religious story is communally created. The Christian story, for instance—which, it may be remarked, formed the background in different degrees for the work of Michael Angelo and Shakespeare—had been experienced, made known, checked and elucidated by an untold number of Christians. It continuously enters into emotional reality in a way the artist can never accomplish, because it is the summation of the experience of the community. In concreteness and expressiveness, in the revelation of fundamental experience, the religious story, which is the possession of the mass, is more inclusive than the creation of the artist. They both deal with the same experience, but whereas the artist only clarifies and refines, the religious story embraces the totality of all the various experiences, and gives it form and continuity in a way the

greatest artist could never accomplish. The highest reach of individual artistic accomplishment in one form is perhaps the epic, yet the epic always remains one accomplishment amongst many given to the communal experience. The religious story is final and complete because it gives form and substance to the unknown as experienced by most men in a community. It is basic because it gives instant and traditional form to the knowledge that the individual desires.

It can be contrasted also with the work of the artist in the manner in which it enters into action. The religious story, the social creation, is lived continuously by the community. In a sense it is never out of the background; it is the continuous reference for all action. It is as present as the landscape itself; it is as real as the ebb and flow of social life. It forms an unconscious supposition through all the varying forms of individual and social activity; it is the thread which holds together difference experiences. A believer in the story not merely believes in it; he hardly makes any distinction between himself and the form the story takes. It is interwoven into the intricacies of his own life, he calls upon it almost without reflection to elucidate his experiences. Artistic creation is never as primary as this; it is experienced fragmentarily; it is known and partly forgotten, or, if it is not forgotten, then never appealed to continuously and without hesitation to explain, guide and make real. Art is only one illumination of emotional reality. The religious story seeks to be the total illumination; it seeks to be the realization of the whole tapestry of human experience outside its factual forms. Thus the religious devotee seeks to be immersed continuously in the story that he knows; he can never be immersed continuously in one individual artistic creation.

In action, too, the story is lived, and the devotee takes part in it. His religious worship is constructed around what he believes to have taken place. He is not merely an actor, he becomes a part of the drama, and the total meaning of his life is involved in the story that he knows so well. In the Christian religion, for instance, the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the vast revelation of certain experiences into which the devotee enters, not as spectator or a player, but as one who belongs in living essence to all that is taking place. The

spectator of a Shakespearian tragedy is not saved or damned according to what happens to the leading tragic figure, but the Christian devotee is saved or damned according to what happens at the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In action, too, the religious story is unitary throughout the social mass; it is as real to the learned as it is to the illiterate. In the celebration and recognition of its contents all levels of intelligence join in the same experience. There may be different qualities and refinements of understanding, but the primary thread is the same. This is hardly true in the realm of art.

It is the supposition of this paper that the Christian religion as expressed in the imagery and the events recorded in its creeds is a story of this nature. Or, to use a more convenient word, it is a myth. This word is by no means used in a derogatory sense. It is used as a convenient word to describe the structure that men make to explain and make tangible that emotional hinterland of experience that exists around significant factual experience. Where the relationship between God and man becomes most real and concrete, there it is that the imagery enters to hold, to purify, to make tangible without continuous effort, the experience in which the relationship takes place.

In the Christian story it may be assumed that there are factual historical parts. Jesus lived, was crucified, made such an impression upon certain of his followers that they revered his memory and meditated upon his teaching. That they went beyond reverence and meditation is also probably a fact, but why they did so is more likely to belong to religious psychology and the whole relevance of the social mass in which they found themselves, rather than to any supposed factual truth. Reason, and the modern historic approach, must suppose that Jesus was born in the same manner as any other person, was a man in all his parts as any other man, died and entered into the mystery of death just as any other mortal person. Outside this, and outside the core of the teaching that he presumably left behind, there is little evidence of anything else—evidence that would justify any historical reconstruction. Outside this bare outline there is little in the Christian story that a modern historian would accept as history. If he did accept anything else he would do so because of his belief in what history is for, rather than

what history is; and in this sense he would apply a different judgment to Christian history from that applied to all other historic events.

But it is obvious that this bare outline is not Christianity. Christianity may be fairly summarized by those sentences of the Apostles' Creed which state the belief of the Christian Church about Jesus:

... And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, ... Was crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead, He ascended into Heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

Yet of these sentences it may fairly be said that they were composed by men who knew little or nothing of the historic Jesus. It may be said with some certainty that there would be no Christian religion to-day if that religion had been dependent solely on the life of Jesus. It was what men chose to make of Jesus in the interpretation of emotional experience that made the Christian religion. In a very real sense the story became more important than the fact; if there had been no story it is doubtful whether there would be any remembrance of the fact. Jesus as an historic character would have been forgotten; Jesus as the Son of God has lived. And there is no historic evidence that he was the Son of God.

The Christian story, therefore, since it must have an origin, has it in those major emotional experiences known to men, experiences so vast, imperative, and yet so evasive that they demand some symbolism of structure, some form of imagery that will strike at once the truth in the heart of the person who experiences. In the major relationship between God and man it is not difficult to realize how urgent was—and is—the need to mediate the presence of God through imagery that passes beyond art to a realm of emotional reality justified in itself. Jesus Christ as the Son of God was imagery justified because of the clarity and concreteness it gave to an intense and difficult experience. It made familiar—and in its familiarity did not take away the mystery—the reality of the experience of God.

The emotion which created the imagery justified it in a realm which can only be called religious. "Jesus Christ the Son of God" is not the creation of art, it is imagery beyond anything found in art; there is no real comparison between the two; "Jesus Christ the Son of God" is the creation of a community of feeling reaching out after the intangible yet known, the ultimate yet inexplicable; it is imagery created by shared feeling trembling on the brink of the final. There is no finality in art in this sense; there is finality in religious imagery because nothing can be added to it or taken away by an individual save in contact with community—it is the creation of the mass and can only be added to or subtracted from by the mass. The individual can make his contribution, but that will be subordinated to the ulterior experience of the mass. The creation of the artist is not subordinated to the mass; it stands alone; and in that manner it is fragmentary to the whole. The creation of religion submerges the individual. Prayer when it passes beyond the contact of man and his Maker never belongs to the man. It must be shared; in a very real sense it is not his. A lyric, if a man has created it, is his; he can claim possession over it, and no one will say him nay; but let a man claim possession over a prayer, even to the extent of declaring that it is his creation, and immediately he destroys its nature. When it is real it is immediately claimed by the mass, the mass takes possession of it and tends to forget from whom it came. Religion, even when it is most individual, is always shared by the community. It is not altogether as the possessor wills, because it belongs to the nature of the experience that it should be shared. The deep emotional individual cry, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God", is not essentially a lonely experience; it represents a point where communion between fellow-beings becomes most real. The statement "Jesus Christ is the Son of God" is the creation of shared experience by the mass.

"He rose again on the third day." That Jesus perhaps died a martyr's death is significant, but against the background of death the fact is meaningless. Because of the fact alone he would not have been remembered. A martyr's death does not grasp the reality of death; it is simply one death among many.

The mystery of the stilled life, the mystery of the living, thinking being passing from the outer substance of things, and yet so obviously a part of that substance, life of its life, particle of its whole, remembered in poignancy and tragedy by those who are left behind, remembered in that manner even by those who only look on and are not bound to the passing being in the intimacy of affection, all that is not even remotely touched by the martyr's death. All that history can say, all that reason can affirm is that Jesus died as a martyr—nothing more. The historian as a Christian can say of the Christian faith that the empty tomb and the appearances are facts, but he cannot say that as an historian. He cannot say that the Resurrection is true because it is supported by history; history does not support it; all that he can say is that the Resurrection is true because a rational interpretation of life demands that it shall be true. In this light he may be able to find some substance in the records, but not otherwise. The thesis of this paper is that the Resurrection is not historic fact; it did not take place. The story of the Resurrection is a part of the Christian myth. Since it did not take place in history it can be said to be communally created in the same sense that the imagery "Jesus Christ is the Son of God" was created. It was not an answer to a need, the need for the explanation of the fact of death; it was a creation from the mystery of the fact of death as experienced by men in shared search and understanding. Death is a great deal more than a fact; it is a great deal more than just a human being passing away—whatever that may mean; it is one of the supreme surroundings of human life, it is inexplicable, yet, in its emotional reality, known vividly to those that must contemplate it. Death as a fact must be surpassed, for the fact is no true representation of the occurrence, the fact itself is actually a denial of all that takes place, for it is merely an ordinary occurrence in time; to the onlooker death is more than that. The onlooker is the focus of all that takes place; of "beyond death" he knows nothing; all that he can know is the surround of his own emotional state, the hinterland of reality that presses in upon him from the actual experience of the fact. To grasp this the mass must have some imagery that will in some manner make their emotion explicable to them. There must be an imagery that will strike the bell of truth and describe in some near terms

what takes place. In this sense the Resurrection is a mythical representation of the mystery of death. Like every other part of the Christian story, it has lived, not because what it describes supposedly took place in the past, but because it is a religious and imaginative explanation of the event of death. Once again it is the spontaneous creation of mass life, and not a remembered incident—or cosmic event—of the past.

“From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.” This statement is the completion of the Christian myth, the final summation of the story. It had a beginning and it must have an end, and yet—unlike artistic creation—it can have no end, no completion of form. The beginning is uncertain—the arrival of Christ is lost in indeterminate ideas of the Messiah and the Pre-Existent Christ; the end is lost in the indeterminate idea of life everlasting. The existence of Christ and the Resurrection demands that there should be some finality of union between moral man and the ever-living Christ. But why—there is nothing in the story to explain. The second coming is hardly a proclamation of history; at the best it is a proclamation of faith based upon something very different from history.

But the end of the story—if story it be regarded—is not an artistic flourish. Men in the mass do not create so definitely and concretely. The end is necessitated by experience; it, too, is the representation of emotional knowledge.

For right and wrong do not merely belong to factual acts and acknowledgments. The moral order of very necessity is greater than life itself. If life were all, then men and women would be justified in extending it on any terms. Men do not want such an extension; life ceases to have meaning in such circumstances. Life must be subordinated to certain values, and there will come a point when men will declare that these values are more precious than life. Such is experience. There is no cut-and-dried explanation of it. There is no complete solution that satisfies intelligence. In the last resort, once again, men are driven back upon emotional experience, vague distant vistas which are nevertheless just as impressive as clear-cut logic, and which, on occasion, can be more piercingly clear than logic. This experience, too, that of moral value, must have

its representation, and, by and large, the “second coming”, “the judgment of the quick and the dead”, is the affirmation of the triumph of moral order, the conclusion of total experience. The end of the story is the creation of the mass. How and when this creation takes place it is perhaps impossible to say; just as it is impossible to trace the origin and growth of any significant abstract idea, or any significant communal belief. The untold streams of human life flow into it, forming large tributaries long before they reach the mighty river.

If, then, the historic Jesus be accepted as fact, his life by no means accounts for the existence of the Christian religion. The main background of the religion is the myth; without that there would be no Christianity, and perhaps no memory of Jesus. The myth is the spontaneous creation of human experience; and the existence of other religious myths in other social environments from that of the Western seems only to emphasize this.

The crisis of the Christian religion in the modern world is not that the myth has been found to be “untrue”; it is not “untrue”; it is a reflection of human experience; the crisis is found in the fact that up to the modern age it has been regarded as a factual representation of events. It is not so now regarded, not by millions of practising Christians. The Christian myth in the modern age has been isolated; it has become one factor among numerous others; it is no longer the only possible explanation of cosmic events or dire human experiences; it is seen to be merely one representation of something far more important than itself, namely, the human experience from which it is derived.

Certain conclusions suggest themselves.

The first is that when people are aware that they are using terms indicative of experience rather than of historic fact, there need be no difficulty about the changed use of words. If words and phrases which had a certain meaning in the past are used with a newly developed meaning, and the use is clearly understood, then there can be little objection to the use of historic Christian terms. Their use or otherwise will be conditioned by the needs of communities. It is unlikely that any sudden

drastic change could take place; different people at different levels of development and belief will be concerned. It is unlikely that the change will suddenly become clearly defined, rather is it likely to be a matter of growth, trial and error. There can be uncertainty, the need to see more clearly, the need to be at one with those similar in spirit and experience if not in phraseology. In any case the mythical terms for many a generation are likely to be evocative of certain truths that cannot be readily expressed in any other way. Religious experience on the whole is traditional; the knowledge of one generation is derived from and connected with that of another; religion itself would tend to become episodic if it were not grounded in the past as well as the future.

There will be those who do not feel any need to use the imagery of the myth; they may be able to create something more effective. In any case there will be those who will attempt to do so; in such a manner is communal belief created.

A second conclusion is that by acknowledging the Christian story as myth derived from human experience, there need not be that estrangement between the Christian Church and other bodies of belief based upon various interpretations of truth. In the rationalizing modern world Christian beliefs can find their place without recourse to such terms as "superstition", or, on the other side, such terms as "paganism". Indeed, it is conceivable that the recognition would break up the ground in order to achieve a new synthesis. A belief based entirely upon reason can tend towards a certain factualism which ignores those vital experiences from which myth springs; a belief which tends to interpret in a factual way the story of the myth can tend towards an esotericism which sooner or later banishes reason. There can well be an effort towards a higher unity based upon a new interpretation of the Christian story.

A third conclusion is that in spite of everything there will be those who will make a vital distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of tradition. Both will have value, but it may well be that out of spontaneous experience there will be those who will choose to approach the Jesus of history and find rational inspiration there, rather than seek any vital illumination in Christian myth. It is possible within the Christian records to find an historic figure, and that figure, although of cosmic

importance, can enter into the range of the experience of those who wish to bring him into their meditation and aspiration. The historic figure can become newly important, a focus of union, because supernatural or mythical developments are taken from him.